Planet of the Apes... the words bring forth all kinds of images and, for many of us, all kinds of memories. But how did it all get started? What exactly was the who, the what, and the why? For that information, we must turn our Wayback Machine to the year 1963. It was in this year that Pierre Boulle wrote "La Planete des Singes" ("Monkey Planet" for us non-French speakers!). The book was a surprise best seller in France, but largely ignored elsewhere. However, it did catch the fancy of one young astute producer, Arthur P. Jacobs. After being introduced to the book through a literary agent, he purchased the rights and began shopping the idea around Hollywood. He was promptly turned down by every studio, who deemed his idea "unfilmable." Undaunted, he kept pushing, armed with a first-draft screenplay by Rod Serling, a directorial commitment from Franklin Schaffner (soon to make Patton), and a star, Charlton Heston. Alas, he was still turned away. Persistence was Jacobs virtue, because he finally managed to convince the then-head of 20th Century Fox, Richard Zanuck, to take a chance. No chance really, since the wily Zanuck smelled a potential hit. Still, he was concerned about the makeup for the apes. The film would die if the audience didn't accept the apes as real, breathing characters. Zanuck decided to put up $50,000 to do makeup tests, which included filming a test scene featuring the characters of Taylor (then called Thomas) and Dr. Zaius (played by Edward G. Robinson at this point). In an interesting sidenote, two other actors appear in the scene: a young James Brolin (playing Cornelius) and a pre-Nova Linda Harrison (as Zira). This test clinched the deal, and Planet of the Apes was put on the "fast track." This seems like a good point to talk about the makeup. At the time it was made, the biggest makeup job a budget of $1 million, was John Chambers. His impressive resume includes Outer Limits, I Spy, and The List of but this was to be his crowning achievement. The makeup, created by his crowning original test Ben Nye, Sr., was provided a start. His crowning original test hybrid, but Chambers strove for a more natural look. He researched apes and looked for little nuances and details that he could bring to the characters. It was these small touches that made the difference. Also, Chambers was on the cutting edge of materials and his use of foam latex appliances specially outfitted for the actors (down to special breathing passages inside the ape muzzles) allowed for greater flexibility than ever before. He also established the practice of pre-painting the appliances to save time (about 45 minutes per actor) as well as preserve continuity. Keep in mind that during production on the first film, up to 80 makeup artists were employed! It is no secret that many of today's top makeup artists were inspired by Chambers's work on Planet of the Apes, for which he was awarded a Special Academy Award. (He is also the only makeup artist to have a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.) With the makeup problem solved, the film moved quickly into production during the summer of 1967 with a budget of $5.8 million. Shortly before filming began, Edward G. Robinson bowed out of the role of Dr. Zaius due to the makeup and his declining health. Maurice Evans took the role and created one of filmdom's most memorable characters. The film's first day of shooting was May 21st and started late when the beards for the other astronauts didn't arrive on time. The heat was so oppressive on location in Page, Arizona that one of the actors playing a astronaut passed out. Things got better as filming progressed, although by June 13, Heston had caught a cold. However, this seemingly bad luck resulted in one of his most famous line deliveries. That was the day they filmed Taylor screaming, "It's a madhouse!!" In his book "The Actor's Life", Heston relates the story: "Today was a really horrible day. I'd caught a cold, something I almost never do while working. I felt lousy when I came to work, and worse every time that damn fire hose hit me. I turned off when I had to scream the last speech of the sequence, dripping and hose-battered. The hoarse rasp I was able to produce is really ideal; this first scene that we hear Taylor speak after his throat wound." (For Apes purists though, July 6 is the day they shot the "damn, dirty apes" scene!)
Filming progressed through the summer, proving extremely taxing on the actors in ape makeup and wardrobe. Kim Hunter once said she used Valium to get through her makeup sessions and Roddy McDowall said he would sweat just remembering the heat. Another interesting thing occurred when the ape factions (gorillas, chimpanzees, and orangutans) divided off during meals and breaks, not mingling with each other. Not that any of this would prove to hinder the film. When it opened on February 8, 1968, *Planet of the Apes* was an immediate hit ultimately grossing $15 million in its initial run. This certainly paved the way for a sequel, and then the real phenomenon was born.

You have to remember the four sequels were produced within 4 years (1970-73) keeping the audience primed for more adventures. Heston declined the first sequel (*Beneath the Planet of the Apes*) initially, but finally agreed to a cameo as a favor to Zanuck for his belief in the first film. He wanted Taylor to be killed off at the beginning, but Zanuck suggested he disappear at the beginning and reappear for a death scene at the end. Heston agreed and production moved forward with *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* in 1969. *Beneath* deals with the arrival of a new astronaut (James Franciscus) who is looking for Taylor and ends up in the middle of an ape/mutant human battle. Definitely a lesser film, but still very enjoyable, the success of *Beneath* insured a third film, *Escape from the Planet of the Apes* which arrived on the scene in 1971 with a decidedly better script than *Beneath*. It featured Zira and Cornelius (Kim Hunter and Roddy McDowall) time traveling back to Earth of 1974, initially treated as celebrities, but then meeting their untimely deaths when they accidentally reveal what is in store for Earth's future. Such seemingly dead ends have never stopped the screenwriters of the *Apes* films. The fourth entry, *Conquest of the Planet of the Apes*, follows the son of Zira and Cornelius in the year 1991. The Earth now uses apes as laborers and servants, and the son eventually leads them to revolt. This is really the darkest film of the group and the most violent. Still, it made money and the studio rushed forward with its "Final Chapter". From the beginning, *Battle For the Planet of the Apes* was touted as the last *Apes* film. Just as well, since the series degenerated with each installment. However, that didn't stop 20th Century Fox from further exploiting their property with a weekly TV series in 1975 and an animated version the following year. Both followed the downward spiral, unfortunately. A pity too, since the cartoon used the original Boule novel's ideas about a more advanced *Apes* society with skyscrapers and airplanes.

During the *Apes* glory years, 20th Century Fox (foreshadowing the deal they would later forge with George Lucas) merchandised the *Apes* films endlessly. In 1974, when they released all 5 films as a package to theaters as the "Go Ape" theme (watch all 5 films together), they tailored the promotion with the Mego Toys Co, to tie in with their line of *Apes* action figures. Most of us recall the variety of *Apes* stuff that was available: lunchboxes, coloring books, model kits, even beach towels and silly soap. Of course, most of this stuff is bringing in top dollar on eBay and other collectible sites and shows.

Okay, so with all the background laid out, how do I personally feel about these movies? Well, let me tell you, I still remember that night. The first night I ever saw it. It was a Friday in 1973. I remember the rolling film canisters of the "CBS Friday Night at the Movies" opening. My parents were playing cards in the next room with neighbors, oblivious to what I was doing. For the next two hours I was spellbound; held captive by imagery that I had never seen before. The ingenious crash, the discovery of the "scarecrows", and of course, "the hunt" where we first see the apes, beginning with that masterful cut from Charlton Heston to the hunt leader as he turns to reveal himself in full simian splendor. From that night, I was hooked...I had joined "The Planet of the Apes!"

I immediately wanted to learn more about the films. I wanted to try the makeup, and I wanted the toys. This was long before home VCRs so I was jonesin' for more *Apes*! Fortunately, the TV show was right around the corner (and at age 8 I didn't really realize that it wasn't that good). As the years passed I began to have different ideas about the films and what I responded to in them. One side of me was quite rational, even academic. The other was based on emotion, that pure "feeling" that draws you into something. Unable to completely
Last night I've decided to allow both sides to speak independently in order to express how they feel. (Sounds like some sort of sci-fi hokum a little, I know, but it kinda goes with the theme. Work with me, I'm creating something.)

Let's start with the serious assessment:

When I was a kid, the original Planet of the Apes was a wild adventure ride. At the age of 8, the film's social satire was completely lost on me. I was too caught up in the adrenaline rush of action/adventure among the monkeys. But now, as an adult with college and some film experience behind me, I find myself interested in how it happened, what it meant, and what it means. This may seem like pretty heady stuff for such a pop-culture phenomenon, but stay with me and I think you may agree.

The core of the film Planet of the Apes lies in the character of Colonel George Taylor (Charlton Heston) and it is through the very casting of Heston that the thing succeeds. Take a moment and think about what Heston stood for as a movie icon by that time, the quintessential moral center. His portrayals of such greats as Moses, El Cid, Ben Hur, Michelangelo, Andrew Jackson and a slew of other historical figures set him up to be the logical choice for the role. But, (and this is Apes genius) what if he isn't the hero, but the antihero, the new emerging character of 60s film. The film takes Taylor and molds a man so fed up with humanity that he accepts the mission into space knowing that he again, for him, this for, commanding as if jungle. Even when his unknown planet and crew are stranded, to a fellow "You are here and ahold of that and might as well be indeed, but enough his paradise unravels and the man who walked out on mankind finds himself in the unique position of having to defend it. Through it all, Heston delivers his lines with juicy spite, practically spitting out his words ("Get your stinking paws off me you damn dirty ape!") through clenched teeth! This is my favorite Heston performance because he never seems afraid to push a little more. (It is interesting to note though, that Heston himself wrote in

his journal after first seeing the completed film "I was a little disappointed in my own performance. There didn't seem to be enough weight to it, somehow.")

Lately, Apes enjoys a resurgence, as a pop-culture phenomenon, a victim of the move to regard all things 70's as retro-cool. When you ask most people about the Apes films, you find that they identify it as a 70's artifact. Too bad, since the series as a whole smacks of the cynicism of a country emerging from the counter-cultural battlefield of the 60s. The Apes films seemed to have had a pulse on the then-current events. Sure the anti-war message is shoved down our throats in Beneath the Planet of the Apes, the torment of the slave in Conquest of the Planet of the Apes, and the threat of nuclear war in Battle for the Planet of the Apes, and all this may seem a little corny now, but we must take these films in context. Planet stands on its own as a complete work, but the other four in the series have strong ties to the social commentary of the day, and not always able to relate those messages with subtlety. By the time Battle for the Planet of the Apes was trotted out in 1973, the series had degenerated into little more than Saturday morning kids fare, albeit one with a convoluted message. Hey, Battle was bold enough to give us the black/white stripe analogy long
before it became PC. And look at this rundown of issues featured in the series:

- The Black Movement (Conquest/Battle)
- Government Controls/Military (Planet, Battle)
- Youth Movement (Planet)
- Societal Apathy (Planet)
- Flight into Space (Planet)
- Threats of Science (Planet, Beneath)
- Nuclear War (Beneath/Battle especially, but hell, all 5 films really!)
- Threat of the Future (Planet, Escape)

I think the filmmakers saw an opportunity to say a little something about these things amid the adventure. And since the films were nurtured in the 60s— that generation of idealism and hypocrisy, it all makes sense. You have to remember, the 60s were, as author Herbert London states, "a drama that evolved into deceit and denial." That is the core of Taylor’s character, denying his role in the human race. Not difficult to see what attracted Heston to the role; there was something to play and something to say. That is why Planet works so well, while the other films in the series fall flat, other than as enjoyable romps. They really have nothing to say, and no one to say it. Not until Conquest anyway, when Caesar (Roddy McDowall) steps up to play militant leader to the ape slaves and leads the revolt against their "masters". Indeed the last two films in the series (Conquest and Battle) were extremely popular with black audiences. The series said its farewell and further degraded itself by becoming a simian version of The Fugitive in a weekly CBS TV series in 1973 and then an animated version in 1974. This merchandising amid an onslaught of long before that Lucas fellow, and the original idea was forgotten. Most folks will say they watched it, even liked it, but they give it no more credo than mega-hit Independence Day now gets. However, with the remake coming, prestige for the original film seems to be on the rise. Glad to see the rest of the world discover what we have known for years.

Well, enough of the highbrow, how about something a little more visceral and emotional:

Even though I am a huge fan, I have to admit there is a certain kitsch to the whole Apes thing. Perhaps it lies in the reality that the idea is fine with simians, since we readily accept that the apes could take over, but how quickly the idea falls to pieces if the title creature becomes anything else (Planet of the Sheeps?). This reverse Darwinism allows us to look at ourselves, something great science-fiction should always do. Planet of the Apes lets us accept the fallacy of being human. On a gut-level, that is about as much psychobabble as I care to consider, and certainly more than I ever considered as a kid. Hell, I was more concerned with why I always had to play Dr. Zaius when we played Apes instead of Army. You can tell I have such a fondness for this film and its sequels. There was just something about it, and it has never wavered since that first night in 1973.

At that age, and steeped in Star Trek and school and art (an admitted nerd!), Apes was a refreshing sidebar. It had plenty of action for one, and playing Apes was generally more aggressive fun than playing Star Trek. Must have been that primal urge for control! Regardless, I devoured everything Apes that I could get my hands on. And we all remember just how much there was to get our hands on: books, action lunchboxes, and literally the kitchen sink; and at least warrant an Apes collectibles is a great one by Chris Sausville
put out by Schiffer Publishing.) And for a young boy, Apes provided an outlet for imagination.

As the years passed, and Apes went the way of all things 70s, my fondness for it never left, merely tucked away for that occasional late night airing of Beneath and the coming of videotape. Of course, now we have DVD widescreen prints to allow us to savor over every shot of all five films. And with the new film and the recent elevation of the original as a classic, I can only sit back, scan over my autographed photos of Heston and McDowall, pose my Dr. Zaius doll and smile. The cool thing about Apes is that it works on different levels and for different ages. And that allows for all sorts of explorations into it as a pop-culture phenomenon.

Now, doing this is not without potential roadblocks. I was watching Beneath the Planet of the Apes the other day and was reminded that one of the charms of the series was its apparent disregard of continuity. We all can tell that each film was originally thought to be the end, but then the studio would demand another sequel. While they don’t really affect the flow of the stories of the individual films, overall they are certainly headscratchers. For example, how exactly did Zira and Cornelius get Taylor’s ship out of 20+ feet of water in the middle of that lake (full of water) and get it into space in Escape? In Beneath, why is Brent on a rescue mission when Taylor’s original mission was one of exploration (and knowingly through time)? Why do Zira and Cornelius have changes of human clothes in their house? Are they into kink? What is all that stuff on the end of Brent’s crashed ship in Beneath? Did he drag the launch pad into space? If Caesar had never seen a picture of his parents, and they were the only ones to have worn those “ape clothes” then how in Battle do all the apes have that exact same wardrobe style? Okay, so maybe I am really digging, but I find it fascinating that, with all these glitches, the series as a whole works really well at sustaining a total ongoing adventure. And a damn entertaining one at that. Sure the sequels are not up to the artistic and high-minded standards of the original film, but then, I don’t think they were ever intended to be. Each Apes film ends with a downer ending, something no film series before or since would ever consider. Think about that, each film ends with some destruction or apocalyptic coda, be it the realization that Taylor IS on Earth in Planet, the destruction of the Earth in Beneath, the violent death of both Zira and Cornelius in Escape, the overthrow of man in Conquest, or the inevitable future vision of ape versus man in Battle. Add to that the death of a major character in each film (Dodge, Landon and Stewart in Planet, Nova in Beneath (as well as the whole planet!), Zira and Cornelius in Escape, Armando in Conquest, and Caesar’s son, Cornelius in Battle.) But we all know the films were huge hits. Just part of the entire Apes allure, I guess. All I can say is Apes has been good to me and for me. I have been entertained and challenged, and what could be better than that? Another viewing of the original Planet? Anytime, says I!


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Just before going to press we were told
Planet of the Apes make-up innovator
JOHN CHAMBERS passed away at age 78
No doubt most of the reason that Planet of the Apes became one of the top grossing science fiction movies was its array of special effects, its amazing "Ape City" and the superb, groundbreaking makeup which transformed some of Hollywood's great character actors into simian scene-stealers. And yet all it required to take every eye (every male eye, anyway) away from the hard work of all of these talented effects and makeup artisans was a sun-tanned, skimpily clad homo sapien beauty with a long mane of brunette hair and big brown, "deer-caught-in-headlights" eyes. The character for whom red-blooded audiences went ape was, of course, "Nova," and the specially "introduced" actress, former beauty queen Linda Harrison.

A native of Berlin, Maryland, Harrison was Miss Berlin at 16, then a model in New York's Garment Center. Homesickness brought her back to Maryland, where she entered and won the state beauty pageant. During the finals in the Miss International contest (held in Long Beach, California), she was "spotted" by then talent scout Mike Medavoy and presented at 20th Century-Fox. Throughout her acting years at Fox, and amidst movie roles in Planet of the Apes and its sequel Beneath the Planet of the Apes, she dated studio boss Richard Zanuck and married him in 1969. (Divorced in 1978, she's more recently been seen in Zanuck's Cocoon movies.) Once again a Marylander, and "probably the happiest [she's] ever been," Linda Harrison looks back with contagious cheerfulness on her show biz years—and the adventure of being the sole Beauty on a planet of Beasts.

While competing in these beauty pageants, did you have designs on becoming an actress?

Yes, very definitely. In fact, it was all "pre-planned" in my mind to enter the beauty contest and get to California and be seen. And it really turned out exactly the way I wanted it to.

Did you have to do a screen test at Fox?

They gave me a "personality test," which was very interesting. They set the camera in front of me and I'd talk to the camera—and then I turned to each side. They asked me what kind of man I would be attracted to, and why, and I just remember so clearly what I said: I just said I wanted a man that had a lot of interests in common with me, that we had to have a wonderful chemistry. I just went on talkin' like I'd done it all my life! They then signed me up for what is called a "sixty-day option" and I went and studied with Pamela Danova, the studio coach. At the time, Richard Zanuck was head of the studio and his father, Darryl Zanuck, was chairman of the board. Richard's assistant Harry Sokolov, a lawyer, was looking for a date for the premiere of The Agony and the Ecstasy [1965] starring Charlton Heston. Well, I was thrilled; I had never been to a premiere, I was all of twenty years old, and Heston was my idol as a little girl—you know, Ben-Hur! So they picked me because Harry was from Baltimore. That's when I first met Richard Zanuck, that evening. He became quite smitten, and that started a romance. It was during the sixty-day period that I started dating Richard, and then I was signed to a seven-year contract.

What was the first thing you were ever in?

It was a pilot called Men Against Evil, which turned into a television series called The Felony Squad with Dennis Cole. Then I did a Batman. Oh, God, Batman! You gotta remember, I'm now with Richard Zanuck, who was a big guy on campus, and he was then in the process of getting separated. (He was married to a Lili back then and then he married me, and now he's back to another girl named Lili. He likes the "L," I guess [laughs]!) Dick had become my mentor and teacher, and he said, "Just do what they tell you." So I started out early in the morning on Batman—it was a cheerleading scene. I was twenty and I had been a cheerleader in high school. And the dance teacher at 20th Century-Fox worked us so hard, by the time the shot came at five o'clock, the scene that they kept me falling over, because I literally gave out! And the dance teacher came back and she said, "Linda Harrison gave me a hard time," complained about my "attitude." I just kept telling her, "You're going to use up all my energy, so when the shot comes, I won't have any."

What was it like, dating "the boss"?

Dick just fell madly in love, and so did I with him. And he did not like me going to the acting school I was attending, working with other actors like Ron Ely. So he built a talent school! It was famous, 'cause out of it came Tom Selleck, Sam Elliott, Cristina Ferrare,
Jackie Bisset, Jim Brolin, myself—all these actors were just thrilled to be getting into this school. Well, one reason Dick had the school was so he would know where I was [laughs]. It was a wonderful experience, wonderful development for the actors. We had coaching, we had fencing, we had dancing—we went for eight hours and we really formed a bond. Of course, I wasn’t there as much as the rest because I was flyin’ off with Dick Zanuck, all over the world. So it was kind of neat, being his girl. Everybody else was shaking, would they get their contract; would they get in a film? You know what that business is all about—especially back then, when the heads of studios had a lot of power. So it was neat, it was just a wonderful time.

What was your first movie?
The first movie I did was Way Way Out [1966] with Jerry Lewis; it was a nice cameo part, a wonderful scene between Jim Brolin and I. After that I did A Guide for the Married Man [1967]. And all during this period, Dick is telling me about this fabulous book called Planet of the Apes and that it was going to make a great movie. He said, “I want you to play the ape, Dr. Zira”—in fact, during the testing for the makeup, I had to go through the whole business with the mask and everything and I played Zira, the part that eventually went to Kim Hunter.

That was the part he wanted you to play in the movie?
No, I think they always had me in mind for Nova. But they needed someone to do the screen test, and you keep trying to employ your actors. So I did the screen test. The part that was hard for me was actually doing the mask, where they have to put all that plaster on your face and you have to lie there for a long time. You have to really be still. Fortunately, I was an acrobat growing up, and a very good one—I won a lot of contests—so I knew how to control my body and be “quiet.” You had to do that, you had to be very still and lay there and be a “good patient.” (A young actor will do anything to get their mug on the screen!) [Director] Franklin Schaffner got involved on the movie and liked it, and [producer] Arthur Jacobs, and there was just a tremendous amount of enthusiasm for it. Arthur was a great showman and Dick was crazy about him. So the two of ‘em just got together and there was lots of enthusiasm. It took a lotta, lotta work, especially in the makeup department. You know, it takes a certain kind of producer to do a film like that, with apes running around!

Did you ever read the book?
Yes.

Did you?
Well, I might of read a few pages [laughs]. I really wasn’t into reading those kinds of books! Kim Hunter told me that there was a bit of trepidation—that people thought it would be a giant hit or a terrible embarrassment. You know, from your experience on workings on films that have kind of “stayed” and become classics, you almost sense it when you’re doing it. There is a current, there is an energy that’s going on. I sensed that. If you’re going to analyze it from the brain, you’ll say, “It could go one way or the other,” but the intuitive feeling was that we had something unique. I’m an intuitive person, and I would say that that’s what I was reading.

Did you enjoy all the location shooting?
It was wonderful. We went to Page, Arizona, beautiful country, and I just marveled at how they move an entire production, like a little mini-town, and set up. It was just beautiful working out there in the desert. That was where we shot the beginning, the spaceship crashing and the astronauts walking around. Schaffner was just fabulous. He was a very laconic man, he didn’t say much, but he was very aware of everything he was doing. Every day, the complaints were that he “kept everything in his back pocket,” what he was going to do during the day. But when you think about it from an artistic point of view, he was very smart because he didn’t let anything else interfere with his focus. The elements were all there—the [behind-the-scenes] people; Leon Shamroy, who was an Academy Award cinematographer; the cast; everything. It was fabulous! Dick and I were like joined-at-the-hip but he didn’t come out to Page—I had my sister Kay there. So at one point I told him, “You come out here!” He said, “Okay, how do I get out there?” I said, “Get your Learjet and get out here.” [Laughs.] And he did! It was very, very exciting; it was moviemaking.

Your Nova outfit was very reminiscent of what Raquel Welch wore in One Million Years B.C.
That’s true. That’s been the traditional costume for “cave girls.”

Where did you shoot the apes’ first scene, where they beat the bushes and hunt the humans?
That was done at the Malibu Ranch. We had built Ape City there. And it was stunning, hot! Whew! The scenes of us in cages were also shot at Ape City.

It must have been worse for the ape actors than for you.
Oh, God! And they reported at three o’clock in the morning! But they were fabulous trouper, Roddy McDowall and Kim, and those were difficult, difficult roles. Maurice Evans was older and I don’t know if his health was that good, and he had an even harder time. But actors have to endure all that sort of stuff, just like everybody else. We had good morale, good people.

How about the “ape” bit players and extras? Did they seem to be having any problems?
Well, the extras just had a mask that they’d pull on over their heads. The primary actors had the tough part. But, you know, I was so delighted and grateful to be in this picture that I probably never saw the negative side as much. I just didn’t. I remember one piece of advice Dick gave me: He said, “You go to work on time and listen to your director and do your job. And I don’t want to hear any complaints about you!” I had to be even more careful, and nice, because I was his girlfriend.
The end of the movie was shot at Point Dume, on the California coast.

Right. That’s where we shot the part where Heston and I ride off and find the Statue of Liberty. Actually, that was a matte. And that [special effect] took a lot of innovation and talent. You’ve got to remember that this film was made in ’67, and a lot of new things were tried that were never done before. There were a lot of breakthroughs, in the makeup and shooting and everything. So it’s really contributed a lot to the industry. By the way, it was wonderful there at Point Dume. We shot there at the very end of this long [production] and we were probably there a full month. We did a lot of beach stuff—Dr. Zira talking about what Man had done, that long speech, all that stuff.

Any “lighter” moments during the making of the movie, that you can remember?

I remember I turned twenty-two during production, and at luncheon one day at Point Dume a big cake was brought out. I was sitting with Heston, who was kidding me about being “all of twenty-two.” (He must have been in his forties.) And then I came back, with all my makeup on, to the studio, and Dick had a big party there, in the commissary. He made a wonderful speech about this girl who had come into his life, and how grateful— he was. He had all of the executives he was very close with, and his friends. It was very exciting it was a good time.

How did you like working with Heston?

Loved it—he was a wonderful actor to work with. He knew Dick very well, he knew it was my first [big] picture, he taught me how to “favor” the camera (I was kind of camera-shy). We spent a lot of time together, waiting for shots and everything, and he was just very, very pleasant, a very good person.

Did you watch rushes?

Sometimes. And it was just a fabulous experience, to be able to sit in on those. It was so beautifully shot and so different and so professional with Schaffner [running the show].

And what more can you remember about Arthur Jacobs?

Well, Arthur was just a fabulous promoter, and his wife was a very good friend of mine. What I remember most was just the enthusiasm of the people. The way Dick did things, he really inspired his people—he was always “up.” (At the time, I think we had the logo “Think 20th.”) Arthur was a great party-giver and promoter—everything “apes,” you know!—and he was a perfect guy for this picture.

Did you ever meet Pierre Boulle or Rod Serling?

Not [Boulle]. I don’t think; they bought the book from him and then Rod Serling came on and did the screenplay. I met Rod, he came on the set.

Had you ever watched Twilight Zone? Did you have any preconceived notions about Serling?

I watched Twilight Zone a little bit, but, you know, I was never into television or film too much as a young person. You’ve got to remember, I was twenty-one, twenty-two years old and there were all these “new personalities” coming in my life.

If as a kid you were “never into television or film too much,” how did you manage to decide to become an actress?

Well, it’s funny—the people that are “movie buffs” aren’t necessarily artistic people or people that are inclined to be actors. I just was more interested in concentrating and focusing my goal, rather than utilizing a lot of my time watching film. You gotta remember, I was eighteen, going to high school in Maryland, working in the summertime at a famous restaurant called Phillips Crab House. I was a normal kid, dating and falling in love, and there wasn’t much time, really, to watch movies. I don’t even watch a lot of films today.

When the movie came out, some of the Fox publicity materials called it a satire. Was that their way of hedging their bets, in case no one would take it seriously?

I’m not sure what was in their minds. I think they just did what they thought was the best presentation. I thought it was a serious science fiction picture—that’s what it was. They knew what they had and they knew it was “different,” and they must have felt it could go one way or the other. But you’ll find a lot of the great pictures can go one way or the other.

Did you tour with the movie, or do any sort of promotional stuff?

Being Dick’s girl, I was always on the “executive end”—I was behind the camera as well as in front of the camera. I think we took it to several different places to be previewed.

What kind of roles did you want to play? Or would you play whatever they told you to play?

Nova was a very good part for me, I had kind of the quality for it. Always, my career was never top priority, I was very interested in my relationship with Dick and eventually becoming his wife and having a family. I enjoyed working in front of the camera but not full-time. I didn’t have the personality or the desire to be a “star”—put star in quotes. I didn’t really think about it too much. But as an actress, when they offered you something, you were supposed to take it and you do the best you could. You know it’s a tough business, and you’re just grateful for any piece of film that you may be able to have. Looking the way I looked, I got these more sexy roles [laughs].

How long did it take for someone to figure out that a sequel to Planet of the Apes would be a good idea?

Oh, well, that was immediate—those were the years of the sequels! Beneath the Planet of the Apes reportedly had half the budget of the first film.

Did you feel the pinch at all?

No, I didn’t. Of course, they “cashed in” on the first one [reused costumes, sets, etc.] and that, in a way, takes away from some of the artistic challenge that the first had. But that’s how the producer saw fit to do it, and Ted Post was a wonderful television director. And I was really featured a lot, so as an actress, that sat well. It wasn’t as good as the first [laughs], ‘cause of course we had Franklin Schaffner on that one and he was one of the top, top directors.

Burt Reynolds was supposedly up for the James Franciscus role, and he didn’t want it.

I don’t recall that. I remember they thought that Jim would be good
because he looked a lot like Heston. Jim was the kind of actor that did a lot of homework behind the camera, kind of a Method actor. He took it very seriously, he was very dedicated.

Surrounded by gorillas and mutants, etc. in these Apes movies, did you fear that your character might get lost in the shuffle?

No, the fact that I was the human, I kind of stood out.

You were on horseback in both movies. Were you a good horsewoman?

No, not particularly. And I had to look like I had never been on a horse, so try to do that and get the horse where he’s supposed to go! But I do remember having a lot of fun in the second one; it was Ted Post and it was more relaxed. I remember running down this hill and getting up so much speed that one of those fabulous makeup men—big guy, burly chest—had to step in and stop me. Otherwise, I would have tumbled, God knows where! It was a very arduous picture, physically, with those horses and everything, but we just got in there and did our jobs! After Beneath, I was cast as one of the starlets in a new television series called Bracken’s World, which was a series Dick for a long time had wanted to do, about a Hollywood studio. So I got that part and I had to finish Beneath and go right into the pilot—I didn’t even get a day’s rest. And I had to start remembering lines [laughs]!

Apart from Bracken’s World, did you do much acting while you were married to Richard Zanuck?

No. I gave birth to two sons, Harrison Richard Zanuck on February 23, 1971, and Dean Francis Zanuck, August 11, 1972. I think I did a couple of guest spots on television, and then Airport 1975.

When big decisions needed to be made at Fox, did he ever ask your opinion? Did you offer opinions? Were you the Hillary Clinton of 20th Century Fox?

He did get my opinions. His partner was David Brown (a wonderful man), and David’s wife was Helen Gurley Brown, editor of Cosmopolitan. And we went all around the world together. So at all those dinners you would throw out ideas—we were constantly trying to figure out what worked and what didn’t and what to go with. And you just kind of go by your gut. So I was always “into” those conversations. Dick is a listener, so you would throw out different things and he’d take it all in. But his decision to actually go with a certain picture or a certain actor or director was something he did himself.

After hearing and gathering all of the information, he went by his own instinct. That was around the time of X-rated Fox movies like Myra Breckinridge and Beyond the Valley of the Dolls.

It’s such a hard business, running a studio and trying to figure out the hits. For some reason, Dick and David decided to go with films that were quite beneath them, that they hadn’t done. But sometimes you’ve got to do something to get back on track. It was a series of things: The relationship with his father [Darryl F. Zanuck] was strained, because “the son was rising”—“the son also rises”—and Dick needed to spread his wings. The father wasn’t ready to let go. Pretty soon there was a wedge between the father and son, and there was a terrible change in their relationship. It was like a divorce, it was like any situation where two people come to a crossroad and things splinter. The father fired Dick and David, and myself [laughs]—I was under contract, I was eight months pregnant. But something good comes out of bad; I’d always said [to Richard Zanuck], “You go on your own.” He was, what, thirty-four years old, thirty-five, and he needed to show that he’s also his own man, apart from his father. So Dick and David went and got a job at Warner Bros., then from there formed Zanuck-Brown. That’s history, what happened when they formed their own company! So something good came out of it, and I always told him, “Something good’s gonna come out of this. You and David are the best team in Hollywood.” And they turned out to be! It’s very interesting to “get in the heads” of these two men. Here are two men that ran a major corporation, Dick and David, and then they formed little Zanuck-Brown. They wanted to start humbly [laughs], and they got a screenplay called SSSSSSS by a makeup man [Dan Striepeke] they thought a lot of. You know, a lot of this business has to do with developing friendships; [a big factor] is the personality of the person you’re working with, what they’re like as a human being. A lot of times you’ll take a script because you like the guy and it looks good and it fits well into your agenda at that particular time, so you’ll give him a chance. That’s actually how that movie SSSSSSS came along. It was something they could shoot for under a million dollars, very inexpensive, so they did it. But then they got ahold of The Sting, and you know the rest. I was with a famous team of producers, Dick and David, and they had such an extraordinary life, so colorful and so dramatic. Most people [in her hometown] think of me as, “She led this glamorous life, they were out there doin’ drugs,” or something like that [laughs]! It wasn’t like that at all. I had a very stable husband. He had a job, he had to go to work every day. He was a fundamental family man. But we had so many great experiences. They should do a book just on him. Why are you billed as “Augusta Summerland” in Airport 1975? [Laughs.] Well-l-l, you know life can make its turns! I was married to Dick, and for one reason or the other, I got involved with a guru—which was kind of the “in” thing at the time. The guru claimed in his cult that you change from who you were born, and so as you make that change, you need a new name [Augusta Summerland]. Unfortunately, this guru wanted to make movies from his screenplays—you get these people on the fringe. And for whatever reason, he put a terrible wedge through my relationship with Dick. It ended that I left Dick and the guru turned out to be a con artist. It was a pretty rough period. I was analyzed a lot during that time; I think so much, at twenty years old, was
thrown at me. I came from a small town of 2,000 and I think a lot of what was given to me there, the values, have put me in good stead. But I think that I got “lost” somewhere, my “identity.” Or the women’s lib made us think that we were supposed to be unfulfilled. Or whatever got into my “being” at the time—it was rough. I left Dick, and it was very hard.

**How did you become involved on Cocoon?**

I was going to an acting class, studying, and we did a showcase and I invited Dick and Lili, his present wife. About this time, Cocoon was in development stages. Dick said, “I think there’s a part for you. In about six months, Ron Howard will be auditioning. “So I just got myself psyched up for it, went in, read and got it. Ron was just a fabulous guy to work with, because he really works from your naturalness, who you are. He gives you a lot of range, a lot of space, to kind of bring out that naturalness, not do the usual shtick of an actor and close that down. And I loved doing that. And Cocoon was another picture where you sensed, intuitively, that it was a special picture. The elements were right, the people were right, and each day it was just a “high” to work on the film.

**You have a much smaller part in Cocoon: The Return.**

They had to cut everybody’s part down—lots, lots got cut. We over shot. They didn’t cut us because we weren’t acting right or anything; [it was a case of] the movie not being the way they wanted it, so they started cutting to try to salvage it, to pull it together. Sometimes in the editing, they can pull off miracles. So that was the case with Cocoon: The Return, a lot of people got cut down.

**You’ll always be remembered as Nova. Is that okay?**

Yes. And, you know, they’re doing a remake.

**Would you be tempted by the offer of a part in that?**

Sure!

**What else do you want your fans to know about Linda Harrison?**

For me, for Linda Harrison, I feel extraordinarily lucky. I started here in Ocean City [Maryland], working at Phillips Crab House, and I dated their son Stephen Phillips, and he was the last man I dated before I went to California and met Dick. And then I came back here four years ago and now I’m back with him. So I feel very privileged, it’s kind of neat being with somebody you’ve known a long time and were with when you were very young. I experienced twenty-five years in California where I married a wonderful man, had two wonderful children, and met so many wonderful people—a full life there. And now I have another full life! So it’s almost two lives, two lifetimes already in this one. I still look great and I feel good, but I really think the acting phase of my life is over with. I don’t like to say that, because then you’re closing that door, but there’s another door opening which is probably going to bring me more happiness. And so, to me, that’s very, very exciting. I like the name recognition that I got from my work, and I have two sons that will be in the work, and I love filmmaking—I think what they can do and who it reaches is a very exciting medium. Yeah, I’d like to get a part, but I’m not the kind that’ll give up everything and go move and go to classes. It’s going to have to be handed to me—which basically it was before. There might be a part in my future—and there might not. But right now I’m probably the happiest I’ve ever been, and that’s important to me.
You once said that you got into the business to be an actress and not to be a star. That's fully accurate, I think for a great number of us. Becoming a star wouldn't have bothered me, but what is a star? A star isn't anything. An actor acts. That's the important thing.

Why don't you collect your own films on video?

Generally I've seen my pictures once and I'm not a big one for repeating the experience! So why save them? They just take up space!

Do you own a Streetcar Named Desire?

No, I've seen it enough. [laughs]

Do you remember what your initial reaction was when you were asked to play a chimpanzee in Planet of the Apes?

I was sent the script by my agent in California, and he wanted to know whether I'd be interested in his following through on it. I read it, I thought it was a damn good script and I said sure. But from reading the script I knew that we were all supposed to look like real apes, and I asked my agent how they were going to deal with this. He said, "Don't worry about that, 20th Century-Fox is a reputable firm. They'll find some way—put little bits of fur here and there." I didn't hear anything more for a while, and then I got a phone call from Fox, from somebody in casting, and he asked, "Miss Hunter, how tall are you?" Which I thought was a very peculiar question. I said, "Five-three and a half, why?" He said, "No, that's fine, thank you very much," and he hung up [laughs] Then later I heard from my agent that the role was mine. Well, of course, I hadn't realized that all the apes had to be short and all the astronauts over six feet, and they wanted to make sure I wasn't going to be too tall! Then came the shocker. The first call was to go out for a fitting, and all I could think of was costumes, right? Wrong! First they stuck me into a death mask or a life mask or whatever the hell it is, which was quite different from most of them. Usually you had straws in your nostrils, but we had a block of wood between our teeth. We had to breathe through our mouths because everything else was covered—you'll notice in the film and in photographs that the lips of the apes never come together, because that was the only way we could breathe. The noses above were purely aesthetic, they had nothing to do with reality.

Then [makeup man] John Chambers showed me some photographs of some of the testing they'd been doing, and what it would look like eventually. I thought to myself, "Oh, boy, what am I getting into?" But I came back again, and the next session was to do full testing with the appliances. The first time it took four and a half hours just to get the face on.

Did it take that long to put on the makeup every day?

During the filming they brought it down to three, three and a half, but that initial time took four and a half. Roddy McDowall and I were there and they found out our voices weren't coming through properly, so we were sent off to a sound studio and we worked on that until we finally figured out just where to place the voice so it wouldn't be nasal and fuzzy. Anyway, a short time later I came back here to New York and I went to my doctor right away, and said, "I need some help for this one, because this is going to be terrible. I need some kind of a tranquilizer for the makeup period, and then I have to be sharp as a tack once we start working." He gave me Valium, and that really was the only way I could get through it.

Did other ape actors have that problem?

It was just insane, for all of us. Psychological problems for everybody—everybody, without exception. We went through hell. I remember on the third one, Escape from the Planet of the Apes, Roddy and I were hugging dear Sal Mineo like crazy. Fortunately his character got killed right off so he wasn't in it all that long, but we'd hug him 'cause [shaking violently] he was like this! Just crazy, the whole time! Roddy and I both kept saying to the other apes, "Everything's fine, don't worry about it, you'll get used to it." Nobody got used to it, but we kept trying to reassure 'em. One of the gorillas came to me once and said, "My wife tells me that I've started talking in my sleep, and I've never done that before in my life!" [laughs]

Who was your day-to-day makeup artist?

We each had our own, and mine was Leo Lotito. After about three weeks I thought to myself, "Oh, come on, I don't need the Valium anymore," so this day I didn't take it before I sat in the makeup chair. And when we got to the set, Leo said, "You bloody well better take that pill from now on, or you get somebody else to do your makeup!" He practically had to hold me in the chair that morning, and he was a wreck.

How uncomfortable were you in that makeup, in that heat?

That was odd. In the heat we damn near died, and in the cold we nearly froze to death. It was no insulation one way or the other, which was very strange.
Did you really faint a number of times because of the makeup?
No, that was publicity. They had fans for us all over the place and they did their damnedest to help us all survive, but it was very hard, very difficult. We had to use straws for drinking, there was no other way, and for eating they brought in makeup tables and mirrors for everybody. [Producer] Art Jacobs provided us with lunch every day because we had to look into a mirror to eat, in order not to mess up the appliance. If you ruined it in any way, that was hours out of the shooting schedule to replace it! My mouth was a good inch or more behind the mouth of the makeup appliance.

**And how long to make the makeup off at night?**
Four hours to get it on in the morning and an hour and a half to take it off at night. Nobody said lightly, "You’re through for the day." They made damn sure you were through. [laughs] Our days were very long—nine started at four A.M. and I’d be lucky to get home by 9:30 at night. Leo and I had a little routine: He had his Scotch and I had my gin, through a straw, while he took off the makeup! One time Roddy pulled at the makeup to take it off—and it took his whole eyebrow off. But just to get it off!

**But you came back sequel after sequel.**
The second one [Beneath the Planet of the Apes] they had to talk me into—I mean, they really had to talk me into. They said, ‘Look, it’s only ten days work and it’s continuity. Please!’ Roddy didn’t do the second one because the timing was bad for him, he was making a film in England and couldn’t, so somebody else [David Watson] took over for him. But I said all right, and I came back. And Escape, the story was good enough for me to want to come back, even though I still had my reservations about the makeup! And I was very glad I got killed on the third one! Roddy went on and did the last two, playing his own son, but for me three was enough, thanks a lot.

**Did you get a chance to rest at all during the day?**
Yes, but that was dangerous, too. You had to lie on your back, absolutely flat, and one time I fell asleep and I had the nightmare of my life. “It’s happened,” I said to myself. “I have become one!” I couldn’t see down below, but I was sure that my legs and everything had become like an ape’s! I told myself, “No more sleeping! None of that foolishness!” [Laughs] I gave up eating, too, I didn’t like looking at it anymore.

**Were there discussions about how you would move and act playing an ape?**
No, but Roddy and I both did our own research, he in the L.A. Zoo and me at the Bronx Zoo. I found a chimpanzee up at the Bronx Zoo who was the only chimp there—they had orangutans and gorillas, but only the one chimp. Which was unfortunate, because he saw me watching him and it got him very angry! I kept trying to hide, I’d get behind groups of people that came into the ape building, but he’d spot me and turn his back [laughs]! I really felt badly, and, believe me, I understood exactly how he felt while we were shooting. We felt like we were in a zoo! We finally got Fox to stop bringing around visitors, because they’d come up and poke our faces with their fingers—they literally did that to us. I couldn’t believe it!

What happened was that Roddy and I got together before we started shooting and exchanged our observances, and we kind of mused around and figured out the best way to move and all of that. We were bashing it on what we had seen real chimp does, but we also knew that we were playing evolved chimpanzees, which made it kind of crazy! We brought all of our thoughts to the director, Frank Schaffner, and he said, “Great, it’s up to you, you guys figure it out.” So we taught everybody else what to do. The one thing that Frank did tell us, something he found out after a few days of dailies, was that we had to keep those appliances moving. He said, “The minute you hold absolutely still, it looks like a mask.” So that’s why Roddy and I ended up twitching our noses a lot [laughs], to keep them moving!

**If audiences had found Planet of the Apes funny, it would have been the Hollywood embarrassment of all time.**
John Chambers said, “We’re either gonna be real or it’s gonna be Mickey Mouse. And we won’t know until it gets on the screen.”

**What do you remember about Ape’s producer Arthur P. Jacobs?**
I had known Art for a long time because he was a publicity agent for years before he went into producing films—he was my publicity agent when I won my Oscar! Art was a good producer, very sweet and very generous to us—he brought all the straws on the set so we could drink, cigarette holders so we could smoke, food and so on. I think one of the reasons why we weren’t allowed to go to the commissary was that they were afraid that no one else would go [laughs]—that no one could look at us and eat, too, it would have killed their appetite!

**Did Rod Serling ever show up on the set?**
Rod came by once, yes, and I even remember the scene—it was the courtroom scene. Of course it wasn’t his script anymore; he had done the original script, and then they reworked it into what we ended up with. I knew Rod from Requiem for a Heavyweight and from other television things I had done with him.

I liked him.

**What role was Edward G. Robinson supposed to play in Planet?**
Dr. Zaius, the role Maurice Evans ended up playing. Robinson tested and then told his doctor what he had to do, and the doctor told him not to do it, that it would be very bad for his heart. But he would have been right for the role. There were others who were asked to be in Planet of the Apes, and then they got a load of the makeup and said no—I think Mickey Rooney was one. I think all the short people in Hollywood were approached [laughs]!

**What kind of an army of makeup people did you have on that film?**
At one point when we were out on the Fox Ranch, I think we had about a dozen makeup artist in Hollywood—there were something like 65 of them working for a few days. If the camera was far enough away, actors could wear overhead masks, but if it got at all close you could see the difference [snap of the fingers] like that. There was one section where the camera had to see a lot of different people—chimps and orangs and gorillas and such—and an incredible number of makeup artists had to come in. But even with just the few of us, our regular group, we not only had makeup trailers but the lab had an awful lot of people working because each day we had to have a new set of appliances. I suppose if they had used acetone to take the appliances off, they might have been able to save them from day to day, but acetone would have killed us so they had to use alcohol. So every day the appliances were new.

**Where did you shoot Planet of the Apes?**
At the Fox studio itself, the Fox Ranch and Lake Powell, which is on the Arizona/Utah border. We were also at Point Dume, up above Malibu.
Any special memories of Charlton Heston? Chuck was very dear–Roddy called him Charlie Hero. I remember we were up at Point Dume, which is where we shot the ending—the Statue of Liberty, the caves, all that stuff. We were out there quite a while, a good week or more; the first day we met at Fox, we were made up and then driven all the way out to Dume (over an hour driving). Then that night we had to be driven all the way back to Fox and the makeup taken off. That first day was just insane. Chuck was the one who said, “Look, you’ve got to do something for Roddy and Maurice and Kim,” and so they got us a helicopter and took us back and forth that way from then on. That cut the time down considerably.

Linda Harrison? Maurice Evans?
Linda Harrison later married Richard Zanuck, she was his first wife. She was a contract player at Fox at the time, I believe, and Zanuck was very interested in her, so we saw a lot of him—he wasn’t part of the picture, but he’d hang around because of Linda. She was very pretty and very bright. And Maurice Evans [laughs], I remember they had to keep taking his wig off all the time because he perspired so! They’d take it off and [fanning the top of her head] try to cool his head down! Fortunately, as an orangutan, he had a little less makeup than the rest of us, but he survived absolutely marvelously. We were a little worried, because of his age and everything else, but except for the heat he had no problems.

A lot of actors would probably insist on a stand-in whenever they could get away with it on a picture like that.
The only time I insisted on it was when we were all on horses, waiting for the blowing-up of the cave. I’m not that good a rider—I’m not an expert at all! I was terribly afraid I wouldn’t be able to control the horse if it were bugged by the sound of the explosion. I said, “It’s dumb to take a chance on that, since I don’t know what I’m doing on a horse!” I just didn’t think it made any sense for me to tackle that one, since we still had a few more scenes to do and they couldn’t write me off. They got a guy to put on my makeup.

But that’s you in the other riding scenes?
Yes, and it was tough. Our “ape feet” were much longer than our real feet, and they had “thumbs” jutting out to one side. So to put your foot in a stirrup was really silly. You could put the whole foot through, including the thumb, and then you could never get your foot out; or you could put only the toes in, and then it was floppy. There was no control at all.

How long were you on Planet of the Apes?
About three months. Beneath I was on longer than I expected because the weather was cockeyed and most of my stuff was outdoors. Escape was then cut short of course—budgets change when you’re making sequels, don’t they [laughs]? That one only took a month or six weeks.

It posed a few heavy questions, but Escape was the most light-hearted and charming of the Apes pictures.
I liked that one. I mean, it wasn’t any easier in terms of the makeup—in fact, it was very peculiar, because Roddy and I were the only chimps. Although the atmosphere on the set was very friendly and fun and all of that, Roddy and I both felt sort of out of it. John Randolph, an old, old friend of mine, was in it, and I grabbed him and asked, “Am I being paranoid or something?” He said, “The problem, Kim, is that I know in my head that underneath all that makeup it’s you, but I can’t keep that in my mind all the time!” For some reason the [human] actors tended to keep us at arm’s length on that one [laughs], because they couldn’t quite ignore the barrier of the difference.

Did you think Beneath and Escape were worthy sequels?
I didn’t think Beneath was, particularly; Escape I do, that was interesting. Then I saw the fourth one, Conquest of the Planet of the Apes, and I was mezzo c mezzo about it, so I never did see the fifth [Battle for the Planet of the Apes].

Would you have kept going with the series if you had been asked?
They asked me if I would do a guest shot on the TV series. And I said no, thank you. I was very glad I was killed off in the third!

Do you mind the fact that many fans remember you primarily for the Apes series?
No, I don’t. The fan mail I get today, nine times out of ten relates to the Apes pictures.
THEY ARE A DIME A DOZEN TODAY, but up until the 1950’s, with the obvious exception of major names like Chaplin, Olivier and Welles, the actor-director was a genuine rarity in Hollywood. In the ‘50’s, however, the floodgates opened, and in the forefront was a light leading man who remembers only too well the stumbling blocks that were once placed in the path of would-be directors.

“It took me quite a while, because in those days, nobody would let anybody new direct.” Don Taylor recalls. “Today, all you have to do is say, ‘I wanna’ direct,’ and the next thing you know, you get a movie. Back in the fifties, it was a hell of a lot tougher. Dick Powell, who was then one of the regulars on a television anthology series called Four Star Playhouse, gave me the chance to start directing.”

“It started out slow, but I parlayed things. In other words, somebody would ask me to act in something, and I’d say, ‘Sure, if you’ll let me direct.’ But after a while, that didn’t work any longer because people weren’t taking me seriously, and I had to really say, ‘I’m a director.’ I was a trialblazer. Paul Henreid, Ida Lupino, Dick Powell—we were the forerunners of actors becoming directors in that period. But it was very difficult—very. We really had to prove ourselves.”

Of course, the days when Don Taylor had to prove himself as a director are long gone, with his list of features running to double digits and the roster of television directing jobs to the hundreds. Few directors that prolific have avoided dabbling in the science fiction and fantasy genres, and Taylor has done more than his fair share in that field, helming such well-remembered science fiction titles as Escape from the Planet of the Apes, The Island of Dr. Moreau and The Final Countdown—not to mention the supernatural shocker Damien—Omen II and numerous episodes of television’s Alfred Hitchcock Presents.

Born in Freeport, Pennsylvania, Don Taylor studied law, then speech and drama at Penn State University, where as a freshman he began taking part in college stage productions. (“There was never any question about it once I put my foot on a stage. I knew I was going to be an actor.”) Hitchhiking to Hollywood in 1942, the youthful Taylor screen-tested at Warner Bros. but was rejected because of his draft status. MGM, not quite as fussy, signed him to a contract and immediately put him to work, assigning him the minuscule role of a soldier in director Clarence Brown’s sentimental slice of Americana, The Human Comedy (1943). “They sent me downtown and put me on a train. I said, ‘Where’s my dialogue?’ and they said, ‘You don’t have any dialogue. When the train stops in Pasadena, there’ll be a family there. They’ll shout, ‘Don! Don!’ and you’ll greet them—you’re coming home from the war.’ So I got to Pasadena and got off and, boy, I kissed my ‘family.’ I had a merry old time! And then I suddenly heard Clarence Brown screaming: ‘Get him out of there! Get him the hell out of there! The actor who they were really trying to photograph, John Craven, couldn’t get off the train because I’d monopolized the whole area [laughs]’”

More minor roles followed before Taylor enlisted in the army, but even then he continued acting. Playwright/screenwriter Moss Hart chose him to play one of the leading roles in the Army-Air Force production of his play Winged Victory, which opened in November 1943. Amidst a bevy of rising stars (Lon McCallister, Jeanne Crain, Edmond O’Brien, Judy Holliday, Lee J. Cobb, Karl

Malden, Gary Merrill, Martin Ritt), Corporal Don Taylor repeated his stage role in 20th Century-Fox’s film version of the play, directed by George Cukor, in 1944.

Returning to civilian life, Taylor resumed his work in pictures with a top role in the trendsetting crime drama The Naked City (1948), which still stacks up as his favorite among his own films. “Naked City was a classic, one of the first of its kind. It was improvisational in many, many ways; now it’s very ordinary to go and shoot anywhere, but Naked City we did long before anybody else. ‘The Naked City was shot on actual locations throughout New York City with director Jules Dassin utilizing a hidden camera, although on at least one occasion all did not entirely go well. ‘I was walking down Fifth Avenue and keeping in view of the hidden camera—stepping around people, so forth and so on.’ Taylor recalls. ‘All of a sudden, a college fraternity brother of mine came along—‘Hey, Don, how are you?’ I said, ‘I’m good.’ ‘Get out of the way, I’m makin’ a movie.’ But he wouldn’t leave me alone, and finally he even grabbed me!’ The role for which he is best remembered remains the MGM comedy Father of the Bride (1950), as fiancée to Elizabeth Taylor (‘That’s still going strong—and so’s Liz [laughs]!’). He reprised the character in 1951’s Father’s Little Dividend as well as playing other leading parts in fifties films at RKO (Flying Leathernecks, The Blue Veil), Fox (Japanese War Bride, Destination Gobi) and Paramount (Stalag 17, as the missing prisoner around whom the plot pivots).

Most actors have at least one skeleton in their closet of film credits, and Taylor has a dilly. “I was getting a divorce at the time, so I called my agent and I said, ‘Listen, I’ve had it. I want to get out of the country. Do you have anything?’ He said, ‘Yeah, we’ve got a picture that’s going in Brazil—I said, ‘That’s for me.’ Turned out to be a thing called Women of Green Hell. I didn’t even read it; when I got to Brazil, they gave me the script. And when I read it [laughs], I was ready to cut my throat!”

The notorious fantasy-adventure (written, produced and directed by Curt Siodmak) was shot under the title Women of Green Hell but released by Universal as Love Slaves of the Amazonas. The top-billed Taylor was captured by a tribe of green-skinned warrior women in the unexplored jungles of South America. “Curt Siodmak—the brother of Robert Siodmak—had written a famous novel called Donovan’s Brain, and he wrote a bunch of films. But this one—oh, God! Terrible! He was a good writer, but he didn’t know how to direct. But there was a dear old actor down there, Eduardo Ciannelli, and he and I just had a great time together. We said, ‘What the hell, let’s do it.’ We kidded each other and we got through it. I got along with Siodmak—almost—but Ciannelli was very rude to him—‘Why don’t you go back to school?’ and comments like that [laughs]. And yet I was having a ball because I was ‘out of commission’—really, that’s all I was doing, hiding out.”

He ended up hiding out a lot longer than he expected. “That damn movie never ended—shooting went on and on and on. For a cheap movie, it was amazing—I was down there in Sao Paulo for a long time, I swam in waters that I don’t think I’d want to go in anymore; I remember a guy saying, ‘Watch out for the piranas just as I was
dving in [laughs]! Brazil uses the Portuguese language, and we had a crew from Argentina, which speaks Spanish. And the Brazilians didn’t like the Argentines anyway.

In the film’s one good scene, our heroes’ boat, is boarded by a gang of cutthroats and a lively brawl ensues. “That scene, I think, was almost an ad-lib. We’d been out all day and we were coming home, and the unit manager (an American out of Universal, there to protect the money) said, ‘Shoot something.’ Siodmak said, ‘What do I shoot?’ and the unit manager said [sharply], ‘Put the camera there and turn it on!’ Then he yelled at some guys, ‘Hey, you guys start chasing these guys.’ That’s why that was probably the best scene: Siodmak didn’t direct it!” Temple scenes for Love Slaves were shot in the Vera Cruz Studios in Sao Bernardo (“It didn’t have any soundproofing, so when I came back here I think I had to loop most of the picture!”).

“I believe Universal did Love Slaves because they had ‘frozen funds’ in Brazil, just sitting there, and so when somebody said, ‘I can make a film in Brazil,’ they said right away, ‘Sure! Go ahead!’ I told myself that nobody would ever see it—a movie like that would never make it. Then television bought it, and that son of a gun’s on all the time! God, I have people call me at four or five o’clock in the morning, laughing so hard they can barely get the words out. They say, ‘Guess what! Love Slaves of the Amazons is on!’”

The Love Slaves experience had a happy ending when Taylor was asked by the Johnston Office to travel through South America on a goodwill tour upon completion of the picture. “I flew to almost every country, and there was a mob waiting for me every time. I really felt like I was back to being a star. It was fun, and I had a good time.”

His acting career in a slump thanks to pictures like Love Slaves and Hammer’s dreary The Men of Sherwood Forest, Taylor’s desire to switch career gears and direct continued to grow. “I’d been in about two dozen films, and starred or costarred in most of ‘em. But the creative forces that I was not feeling as an actor were all in the director’s path. That’s really why I did it. I had spent a lot of time watching directors, and I knew a lot more about directing than I thought I did.” With Dick Powell’s help, he made his directorial debut with an episode of Four Star Playhouse and soon branched off into other shows such as Telephone Tim and Alfred Hitchcock Presents.

“I’d known Mr. Hitchcock because I had been up for a couple of his films. Rope (1948) was one of them; I had just finished Naked City and I went to see Hitchcock about Rope. We just talked—he had just seen Naked City and he wanted to know how they made this shot that shot and the other shot. He marveled at the fact that we shot on Fifth Avenue.

“Anyway, I didn’t get Rope, but I’d been interviewed by him. And once I got to do that first Hitchcock episode, then I used to sit and watch him direct—he was taking all the good scripts. My first year, he and Arthur Hiller and myself were among those directing. Arthur and I were way down at the bottom—if Hitch didn’t want to do it or couldn’t do it, then Robert Stevens got it, and if he’d already had one, then it came down to Arthur or me. Once in a while we’d get a good one; a lot of times we were struggling. But basically those were good scripts—when I think of the stuff that goes by me today, those were excellent scripts. The only thing that was wrong with them was what was wrong with most of the shows at that time, there was absolutely no production. They’d put up two walls and put a picture on the wall, a chair and a table and say, ‘Shoot.’ No books, no magazines, no papers, no frills. You couldn’t get any production worth a damn.”

The CBS show yielded another dividend for Taylor, one far more important than the directing jobs and the experience of working with Hitchcock: Directing the 1958 episode The Crocodile Case brought him in contact for the first time with red-haired actress Hazel Court, reigning scream queen of British horror films. Romance eventually blossomed; Taylor and Court tied the knot in 1964.

After several years of directing in television, Taylor made his behind-the-scenes feature bow with the fantasy-comedy Everything’s Ducky (1961), starring Mickey Rooney and Buddy Hackett as sailors who team up for a series of adventures with a talking duck. The film could hardly have been more minor, but Taylor was still happy to get the assignment “It was a big step at that point. I was directing a TV series called Hong Kong with Rod Taylor when Mickey Rooney called me and said, ‘Would you please direct this?’ I’d directed him four or five times in television at that point. I was hesitant, but Hazel said, ‘Oh, go ahead and do it,’ so I did. I got Arthur Hiller to direct the Hong Kongs so I could get released.

“Everything’s Ducky was too tough—we had to do it in eleven days. Mickey and Buddy were good in it, but they were clowning and I had a terrible time—I couldn’t stop ‘em from clowning, and yet I didn’t have the time for it. Mickey was the producer—it was his company making the film—so what could I do? And the duck didn’t work—they finally tied his beak with a rubber band and made him eat cigarettes, that’s the only way we could get him to him to open and close his mouth as though he was speaking. Talk about cruelty to animals [laughs]!”

Directing for television was not always a pleasure, either, especially when working with a series star who had definite ideas of his own. “That was always one of the difficulties of directing a series,” Taylor grimaces. “Richard Boone had a TV series Have Gun, Will Travel that I had been asked to direct. At one point during an episode I said to him, ‘Why don’t we do such-and-such?’ Boone said, ‘Nope.’ [Pause.] I said, ‘Then, how about so-and-so?’ ‘Nope.’ About five ‘nopes’ later, I asked, ‘Well, what do you want to do?’ He said, ‘I’ll just walk over here and sit down.’ And I said, ‘Okay!’ [Laughs.] He’s directing, I’m only directing traffic, a stop-and-go director. There’s no joy in that. I was supposed to do four Have Gun, Will Travels, but I think I only did one—that was enough of that.”

More to Taylor’s liking were his two episodes of Rod Serling’s Night Gallery, They’re Tearing Down Tim Riley’s Bar with William Windom (Taylor was Emmy-nominated for his direction) and The Messiah of Mott Street with screen great Edward G. Robinson. “Messiah of Mott Street was tough—I couldn’t get Eddie Robinson to be Jewish. And he was Jewish! As a matter of fact, he was my technical adviser, because he was a Levitical student at one point—he helped me a tremendous amount. But he’d spent years being an Italian gangster, and now he wouldn’t give me the Yiddish flavor. He was very sweet, but he wouldn’t bend at all.”
Taylor’s other sixties films as director were Ride the Wild Surf (1964), a Beach Party-inspired surfing romp (Taylor replaced the original director Art Napoleon, who was injured in a fall) and the U.S./German Jack of Diamonds (1967) with George Hamilton. He directed one of his best and most popular films in 1971 when he signed on to handle the second sequel to Fox’s profitable Planet of the Apes.

“Escape from the Planet of the Apes was just glass all the way, smooth as silk,” Taylor reminisces. “Good script (no, a beautiful script), the actors were divine, everything went right. It was one of those instances where I just couldn’t wait to get to the studio every day. There should be more pictures like that, but you don’t get ’em anymore. In those days, all the people hadn’t gotten in the act. Today, you do a picture like that and you have twenty people wanting to get their hands in, wanting to be creative, wanting to have a say. In the old days, it was easy—there’d be a producer and maybe one other person. You can handle two or three or four people, but you can’t handle 15, 20.”

Taylor had not seen either of the first two Apes films when he was approached to direct Escape. “When they suggested I do Escape, [producer] Arthur Jacobs, who I knew for years, said, ‘Well, we can set it up for you to run at the studio, or you can come to my house tomorrow night for dinner and I’ll run it for you.’ So we ran Planet of the Apes, and I thought it was marvelous. Eventually I saw the second one, Beneath the Planet of the Apes; Ted Post directed that. It was a real bastardized version of the first one and it didn’t really work, didn’t have a story. But Escape was one of the best scripts—Paul Dehn was a good writer. I liked our script for Escape as much as I liked the first Apes script; in fact, ours was more humane.”

Aside from the strong story, Taylor’s job was facilitated by cooperative stars who knew their characters inside out. “They were so pro, Kim Hunter and Roddy McDowall, and they knew their characters—I never told them what to do, I always asked. Sometimes Roddy’d say, ‘No, I don’t think our characters would do (whatever it was),’ and how could I disagree? This was their second, third time out! Makeup-wise, though, Kim and Roddy had a terrible time—they had to get in about three o’clock in the morning for makeup, and then when they were done for the day it took an hour and a half to get it off. They’d be sitting there at night after they were finished, having the makeup taken off, and I’d go in and talk to them about the next day’s work. With little drops of alcohol, the makeup men were able to dissolve the glue that held the makeup on and, inch by inch, they’d peel it off. It was painful.”

Escape had its share of lighter moments—more so than any other film in the five-film series—but it also posed some interesting philosophical questions. “That’s right, the profundity suddenly came through at one point. It was a plot where Somebody Had to Be Dumb, and in this case it was the human beings. In this film it worked. But that gets boring after a while; in almost every television show today, Somebody Has to Be Dumb—say something or do something that’s so stupid, because that’s the only way the show can develop or progress. It’s true of a lot of movies, too.”

Extensive makeup played an even larger role in Taylor’s next science fiction film. “I had just done The Great Scout and Cathouse Thursday [1976] for American International, and they wanted me to do The Island of Dr. Moreau for them. But I inherited something that I couldn’t do anything about, and that was the appliances that had been made—chin, nose and forehead for all these man-animals. The idea was that these animal men should have been grotesque—half-human and half beast. But they weren’t—they were all Disney. Cuddy. You wanted to kiss ’em [laughs]. I couldn’t make any grotesquerie out of ’em at all! We had about eight makeup men, with John Chambers and Dan Striepeke in charge; they created all the stuff for the Planet of the Apes films. They made it in their cellsars [laughs]—it was one of those things. And again, you couldn’t reuse the appliances; by the time they came off, that was it, you just threw ‘em away.”

AIP’s Dr. Moreau got an added box office boost from the casting of Burt Lancaster as the vivisectionist, even though Lancaster was far from the first choice for the role. “We were going for an English actor—the fact that it was based on an H. G. Wells story and all, we thought an Englishman should play the part. [Richard] Burton and [Peter] O’Toole and people like that were considered; we never got turn-downs from any of them, they just weren’t available. Burt was available. Back in the days when I made Naked City and he made The Killers [1946] for Mark Hellinger, Burt and I were very close, but even so, when he was brought up in connection with Dr. Moreau, I said, ‘Jeez, I don’t think this is a part for Burt.’ Somebody turned to me and said, ‘You wanna make the picture?’ and I said, ‘Yeah.’ He said, ‘Well, don’t turn down everybody.’

“Right around that point, Burt showed up in Cannes, and he tore the place apart just walking down the street—the people went ape, because he’s an old star, and I guess they don’t get many old stars there anymore. That convinced us that we should use Burt. But even he had some hesitation, so I went and I talked to him. He said, ‘You got a problem with the script.’ I said, ‘Yeah, but what picture have you done lately that didn’t?’ We did have a problem with the script, and we did a serious rewrite on it that...didn’t work, unfortunately. But Burt was very good, because he was secure with me; I took care of him, watched him. That’s my whole theory of directing: security. Give the actor security and, to a great degree, let him go. Sometimes you’re able to do that completely, like I did with Burt, and sometimes you’re not—that’s when you get into trouble. Burt worked very hard, and we had a good relationship.”

Hero Michael York, Taylor opines, also did a good job in the film, but “he was out there on a wing and a prayer. And when it came time for him to start wearing the [man-animal] makeup, was he scared! ‘What are you doing to me? Christ, I’m a leading man! I don’t wanna be a bear’—or whatever it was. We had to hold his hand!” And Barbara Carrera “was about fourteen feet off the ground in those days—she was swingin’ somewhere that I wasn’t [laughs]. But she’s gorgeous, she was perfect casting for it.”

Shot in the Virgin Islands and costing far more than the average AIP exploitation item, Island of Dr. Moreau “was a big picture for Sam Arkoff, and it didn’t do that well. Sam had a good little company, a family-oriented kind of company. I saw letters that went out to his distributors, and they were like, ‘Hi, Joe. How’s Mrs. Doakes this week?’ Hope she’s
feeling better. It was like a high school newspaper [laughs], but it was very sweet, the way that company worked. And they made money—a lot of money. On small investments—they didn’t make big money, but for the investment, they made three hundred, four hundred percent. That’s not bad. AIP movies generally ran in drive-in theaters, and I remember when the rushes on *Dr. Moreau* got to Sam, he started sending cables saying, ‘More light! More light! It’s too dark!’ He was afraid they couldn’t run in at the drive-in.”

Taylor is nothing if not consistent on the subject of *Dr. Moreau*—“He doesn’t think the Wells story was much good (“Wells wrote it, I think, on a weekend [laughs]”), nor was the 1932 Paramount version (“It’s terrible! But critic after critic saw ours and said it wasn’t as good”), nor his own AIP effort. “But I’ve seen it now a couple of times on television, and it looks better now than it did when I made it—I don’t know how to explain that one, but it’s true. For what it was, it worked. But there wasn’t enough horror in it.”

There was no shortage of horror in *Damien—Omen II*, 20th-Century-Fox’s sensationalistic follow-up to their 1976 box office winner *The Omen*. That devil Damien (Jonathan Scott Taylor), no worse for wear after the bloodbath of *Omen*, was back, this time in the charge of William Holden and Lee Grant, and all Hell was breaking lose once again in a picture that seemed determined to outgoremore its predecessor. “That’s one thing that I think was wrong with the script, the idea that More Is Better. There was too much gore—every time you changed a reel, there was another character that you knew was gonna get it. I inherited all that—I would have eliminated at least two of those killings. All the stuff that I did (the kid being killed by the train, the doctor cut in half in the elevator, and so on) was good—I just thought it was too much. Then it got really gruesome at the end. Suddenly Bill is stabbed to death, and Lee Grant gets burned up—Jesus! More is not better.”

Replacing British director Michael Hodges, who had worked on the film for about two weeks (“He and the producer just weren’t seeing eye to eye as to what was being done, and he was fired”), Taylor shot the film in Chicago and on location in Wisconsin, with many interiors also shot on the Fox lot. “I had to redo quite a bit—I would say out of the two weeks work Michael Hodges did, I augmented or reshot about a week.”

Star Holden had been offered the lead in the first *Omen*, but turned up his red nose at the idea of doing a horror film. This all changed, of course, two years and an offer of $750,000 later. “Getting Bill for *Omen II* was a plus value; we had made two movies together [as actors: *Submarine Command* (1951) and *Stalag 17* (1953) and we were old friends. Bill and I used to drink like it was going out of style. Everybody used to drink in the business.” All Holden did during *Omen II* was complain about it (“...sick-sick excesses... unhealthy ambience...”), leaving Taylor a bit mystified. “He thought it was pretty good when we did it—I ran it for him about three times, so I don’t know why he complained.”

A Twilight Zone-ish type of science fiction story, Taylor’s next, *The Final Countdown*, was set aboard the U.S.S. Nimitz, an ultramodern aircraft carrier that passes through a time warp and winds up in the Pacific on the eve of the December 7, 1941, Pearl Harbor attack. Should Captain Kirk Douglas and the men of the carrier prevent the Day of Infamy and change the entire future history of the world? “When my agent sent me the script and I read it, my first thought was that it was going to be difficult. And it was tough—it was a big picture. It was a good picture, except we had no ending—at just went nowhere, the ship came out of the balloon. Everything was interesting getting into it; I thought it was just dreamy getting out of it. About halfway through, you knew that Pearl Harbor was such a historical entity, that it had to happen.” *Escape from the Planet of the Apes* had posed the same type of hypothetical science fiction question, but Taylor is quick to point out that “the thing about *Escape* is that both Roddy McDowall and Kim Hunter are killed—at least there’s an ending. The ending in *Final Countdown* had nothing to do with the whole picture, of being in a time warp. Suddenly they’re just back in their own time period, sailing blithely along!”

Shot aboard the Nimitz—the privilege the filmmakers paid a quarter million dollars for—*Final Countdown* bears a producer credit for Peter Vincent Douglas, “but it turned out to be Kirk. Kirk was great for about two-thirds of it, and then Peter was getting kind of in the way and in trouble, and so Kirk exercised his muscles. Of which he has quite a few. He made a lot of noises. Kirk was very difficult. As an actor, he’s superb; as a producer, he’s a pain in the ass. That’s meant nicely [laughs]. He’s a good actor, easy to direct, no problems.”

In 1987 Taylor directed the made-in-Toronto television movie *Ghost of a Chance* with Redd Foxx and Dick Van Dyke, a *Here Comes Mr. Jordan*-type fantasy that was meant to spark a series. Taylor admits that it was a film that probably shouldn’t even have been made, at least not under the circumstances. “We didn’t have a [workable] script, and it was the start of a writers’ strike. We should have never started. We were rewriting the whole time.”

Taylor is not as busy with directing as he once was, often turning down television directing offers and devoting more and more time to writing; he and Hazel Court Taylor also will not watch television or new movies the way they used to, subsisting instead on a video diet of PBS. “Outside of a movie here and there, most of the new stuff is just terrible,” Taylor says. “There is a great need—a cry is the word for it—for something different, especially in TV. But when you go and give ‘em something different, they say, ‘Oh, no, we can’t make this.’”

Right now his wish is to return to his first love, the stage. “I know I’l direct a couple more pictures—as a matter of fact, I’m contemplating doing one right now—but I feel like acting again and I’d like to do a play. But I haven’t found a play that I particularly want to do.” For a writer/director like Taylor, the solution is simple: “I think I’m gonna write myself a part!”

And he is equally happy with his acting and directing careers. “I love seeing some of those movies that I was in, but I would have died not directing. As I told you, I broke into it when it wasn’t easy. It upset me now that Kevin Costner, for God’s sake, has gone and done a twenty-five million dollar picture [Dances with Wolves]—he’s starring, he’s producing he’s directing... When I decided I wanted to direct, I couldn’t even get to first base; to get a half-hour show, I practically had to kiss Dick Powell in the middle of Santa Monica Boulevard! But at least I helped to break that barrier down, in a way. It is a director’s medium.” [Don passed away in 1998]
A veteran of almost half a century in the film and television industry can't help occasionally dabbling in the horror and science-fiction categories, and actor Booth Colman is no exception. Colman co-starred as the malevolent Moriss in the future-set World Without End (1956), conspiring against 20th century time travelers. On TV, he has guested on dozens of sci-fi and suspense series, from classics like Thriller and The Outer Limits to more recent genre fare like Galactica 1980 and Star Trek: Voyager. He also played the wily orangutan scientist Dr. Zaius on CBS' short-lived Planet of the Apes teleseries (1974).

These credits just scratch the surface of the career of the prolific Colman. Born in Portland, Oregon, and educated at the Universities of Washington and Michigan, he served in the Japanese Language Division of U.S. Military Intelligence during World War II. After his discharge, Colman began acting on the New York stage, rubbing elbows with many acting legends (Boris Karloff and Basil Rathbone among them). In 1951, he headed to Hollywood to make his film debut. Between movie and TV assignments, Colman keeps active with theater work; since 1981 he has played Ebenezer Scrooge (A Christmas Carol's contemptuous cheapskate) more than 500 times on the stage of the Meadow Brook Theatre in Rochester, Michigan.

You were a regular on the short-lived Planet of the Apes TV series.

BC: At the time it was being cast on the Fox lot, they saw a great many people. I had an appointment in the ordinary way and I had to read a scene and they seemed to like the way I did that. I was called back (I think twice), and finally read for the assembled "supreme court." They liked what I did; one of the men said, "Would you feel claustrophobic in that kind of makeup?" Trying to be funny, I said, "Well, I think Lon Chaney's ghost would come down and protect me," or some idiot remark like that. Which they thought was good!
The next thing I heard was that I'd gotten the job as Dr. Zaius. I certainly enjoyed it, but if you said at the time that 27 years later people would still be interested, I would have been amazed!
They told you that you had the job before you were involved in any makeup sessions?
BC: That’s right. Then they did a plaster cast of my head, my face and all of that. At the auditions, the thing was, “Could he say the lines? Could he have intensity?” or whatever it was they were looking for. (That’s what I would look for, anyway.) So, no, there was no makeup session first—that would have entailed a lot of time and money.
Do you remember who else was up for the part?
BC: No, I don’t, but I can tell you that there were a great many.
What was the makeup ordeal like the first time?
BC: Well, it was horrendous. I’ve never cared much for spirit gum and sticking things on and all of that—and this was that in spades! But you get used to anything. I was made up every morning by Frank Westmore, the youngest of the first generation of Westmores. When I got used to it, it wasn’t so bad.
“Walk” me through a busy day for you on the Apes set.
BC: I had to get up around quarter to four in the morning, to be there at Fox, in Frank’s chair in the makeup department, at five o’clock. And I was ready at eight, with about a half an hour or so off in the middle, when they’d bring me in breakfast. At eight o’clock, I’d be on the set, after the wigs and the clothes and all the rest of it. I’m sure they were Maurice Evans’ costumes (from the movies), because the studio had everything there. We were more or less the same size. I like to think that I got that job because I did it well, but it may have been because the clothes would fit!
Then we’d do the day’s work, whatever it was. They got very good at it as time went on, and I’d be through in the early afternoon. But, when we first started, there were days when I was there all day long. Of course, you get very tired; I don’t think I could handle it today. You’d go home tired and study whatever you had to do tomorrow. It wasn’t something where you’d be working constantly, morning, noon and night at all; after all, it was a television show.
And lunch?
BC: You couldn’t have lunch, except something through a straw. I tried to eat a sandwich one day, but you can’t. You had to eat like an animal, with your “other mouth” out in front of you. And you couldn’t rinse your mouth or anything. So I gave that up. I’d have breakfast, and then very little at lunch and dinner.
Had you seen any of the Apes movies?
BC: I saw the first one, and maybe one of the others. That’s all.
Roddy McDowall said that after a while, because of all the rubber appliances, his face was like hamburger.
BC: Well, yes. And some people are sensitive to acetone and those things, which they use to remove the makeup. I know I had problems, too. After two or three days of it, your face is very irritated. If you have a day or two off, it heals quickly—at least in my case it did. But he had skin problems of some kind. They’d spend about 15 minutes taking the makeup off, because they did it very carefully in order to use it on “Atmosphere People” the next day. They used human hair and yak hair on me, so it was an expensive proposition and they saved the pieces. I’d get new stuff every day.
And, once they were peeled off you, they became “hand-me-downs”?
BC: That’s right. I don’t know if they could do that today; it’s probably un-hygienic! Roddy was very pleasant to me and we did our scenes very well. But we were never really formally introduced. One day I was talking to him without my makeup, and suddenly he said, “Oh!” and he started to laugh. I guess my voice was a giveaway and he realized who I was, and I realized that he didn’t know what I looked like without my makeup on!
McDowall also said he had to depend on his eyes and facial movements to do any sort of acting through all the makeup.
BC: The eyes are the only thing of your own that are showing. You have to learn to use your voice so it doesn’t sound too muffled. You have to “throw your voice,” like a ventriloquist. Your body posture and your walk and all of that sort of thing—that’s all you can do. After all, you’re completely hidden otherwise.
You visited a zoo for pointers on how to play an orangutan.
BC: Yes. I, did. I went to the zoo here and watched them. They walk, you know, in a different way, their structure is different.
The reviews of the first episode were universally awful. Variety called it “retarded”!
BC: I thought that was the best one they had! And I still do! I guess the reviewers felt it suffered by comparison with the movie, and perhaps that is so. But it wasn’t so bad. I think it was the best script they had.
Were you disappointed when it was canceled after only 14 episodes?
BC: I certainly was. Not because I thought it was a great artistic achievement, but it was a very nice job. I was hoping that it would get two or three seasons, and it MIGHT have, under other circumstances.