ALAN ARKIN IN CATCH-22

Brent ......... James Franciscus  
Zira ............ Kim Hunter  
Dr. Zaius ....... Maurice Evans  
Nova ............... Linda Harrison  
Mendez ......... Paul Richards  
Fat Man ........ Victor Buono  
Uras ............. James Gregory  
Caspay ........... Jeff Corey  
Albina ............ Natalie Trundy  
Minister .......... Thomas Gomez  
Cornelius ......... David Watson  
Negro .......... Don Pedro Colley  
Skipper .......... Tod Andrews  
Verger .......... Gregory Sierra  

Lucius ................ Lou Wagner  
and  
Taylor ............ Charlton Heston

Beneath the Planet of the Apes was preceded by ominous rumors which seemed to foreshadow any possibility of its being of any merit. Fox began well in advance with a hokey campaign that announced "Absolutely no pictures will be released from Beneath the Planet of the Apes." The reason attached to the withholding - nothing worth releasing. Something more than a rumor, Variety's pre-release review daisied showmen "Fast payoff for fast money," as if word-of-mouth would make moviegoers stay away in droves. The release brought unanimous critical disclaim. Critics that mooned over Planet of the Apes, and there were many, either have ignored the sequel or write of it with overkill and a vengeance. It is a hard thing to be a sequel.

If there is an antecedent fault in Beneath the Planet of the Apes, it is only that it is a sequel to Planet of the Apes, for the two films are of such a selfsame nature that they could have come from some science fiction counterpart to War and Peace which was chopped in half and released not on alternate weeks but alternate years. I hold the original film in no high regard, however it and its sequel are, at the very least, excellent entertainment, and perhaps even a mirror for man and a monument to the insanity of our nuclear policy.

Beneath the Planet of the Apes, like the really best sequels do, begins with the closing moments of the earlier film, and builds in the audience an intense anticipation that they will now see what became of Taylor and the mad world so tantalizingly hinted at in the conclusion of Planet of the Apes. The opening moments carefully weave between the predicament of yet another astronaut, Brent, sent to rescue Taylor and Taylor's exploration of the nuclear devastation in the "forbidden zone." The action segues so effortlessly from Taylor to Brent, who carries the storyline henceforth, that is hardly noticed that Brent is the sole red herring in a script that has been intricately matched to the original film in great detail.

Brent's travels and travels, and our re-encounter with Ape society, which so revealingly parallels our own, are easily the finest portion of the sequel. Where Rod Serling's script for the original was amusingly satirical at the expense of continuity and believability (the see no, hear no, speak no evil monkeys for instance), the satire of the sequel is honed to a finer degree, yet equally amusing. The sequel also manages to add new and interesting wrinkles to the society of the apes and the characters introduced in the previous film. The role of the gorilla in ape society and ape politics is explored. The disenfranchised minority, the chimpanzees, turn out to be hippies and protestors as well. Zira, the chimpanzee that helped and took a liking to Taylor in the previous film, becomes absolutely sodomous in the sequel, helping Brent escape and as he leaves giving him a wink and a sensual sigh.

The introduction of a surviving human population is blazing no new thematic trail, but is a necessary and logical extrapolation from the previous material. Such an overworked idea could easily, and almost does, make the film a disaster. It is hard to shake the feeling that this was all done twenty years before in Captive Women, a 1952 cheapie dealing with a post-nuclear-war New York City. However, the anti-bomb culture, despite its laughability, has one saving grace; it is so totally alien and repulsive that it completely alienates the viewer and forces him into even stronger identification with the desperate predicament of Taylor and Brent. The Apes, which represent the aggregate of traditional human failings, appear attractive to use next to the mutant human culture of New York City, which personifies a less evident yet more reprehensible trait within us, our rationalization in socially acceptable terms of our own innate hostilaty and aggressiveness.

"The mutants do not kill their enemies, they make their enemies kill each other," explains one as he telepathically forces Taylor and Brent into a life-or-death struggle. Between the Apes and the surviving humans we're inclined to agree with Brent and Taylor that this world isn't worth a damn, and are rooting them on as they die attempting to detonate the sleek and evil bomb.

Zira attempt to save Brent and Nova from the dissection cages.
which blows it to kingdom come. The carnage and devastation in the final moments is so electrified and well choreographed that it manages to arouse within the audience a bloodlust in the best tradition of Peckinpah's The Wild Bunch.

Charlton Heston is excellent as Taylor. James Franciscus as Brent lacks the sharp cynical edge of Taylor, but is stalwart enough. Being merely stalwart in film after film is not enough for Franciscus, who is rumored to quit the acting business unless his career clicks after Apes. Linda Harrison is back as Nova, Taylor's woman, and in a very poignant scene, utters his name, her only dialogue, just before dying. James Gregory is the gorilla military leader who marches to wipe out all human life in the "forbidden zone." You remember him as the facist presidential candidate in The Manchurian Candidate 1960. It is remarkable how well he projects through the heavy ape makeup, a credit as much to the makeup department as himself.

All technical departments are up to the standard of the previous film, and the special effects are much more plentiful. Beneath the Planet of the Apes is the finest film that could possibly be made given Planet of the Apes as a premise. Keep it in that perspective and you'll enjoy it.

Frederick S. Clarke
The scope and variety of upcoming product is amazing in the face of persistent rumors from Hollywood and around the world that the saying "there's no business like show business" meant simply that. Voices have been decrying the doom of the industry from all circles, and there is no doubt that the overall film picture is far from rosey, however one fact cannot be denied, cinemagazine is healthier than ever. The following list of productions planned, filming, and completed only indicates that fantasy film production has, if anything, increased. There's a lot in store from artists like Roman Polanski, George Pal, Robert Wise, Stanley Kubrick, Robert Bloch, Richard Matheson, Kurt Vonnegut, and many others.

Beneath the Planet of the Apes SEQUEL as yet untitled, is being readied by Apjac Productions for 20th Century Fox release. Arthur P. Jacobs again produces, and Paul Dehn, who scripted the latest film, has been signed to write the screenplay. Dehn has got to be mighty clever or very trite to come up with any kind of sequel to his earlier script, and is probably sitting in Hollywood right now biting his nails and cursing and damning himself for making the ending of the current film so irrevocably and incontrovertibly the end, period. Little did those reviewers who scoffed at the mere notion of another sequel reckon with Hollywood's overpowering greed for boxoffice coin. This could end up as big as the James Bond cycle! Lensing is scheduled to begin later this year in Pepevision and DeLuxe color. No cast has been set...