Mark Wolf on FANTASY FILM ANIMATION

Frederick S. Clarke on HOUSE OF DARK SHADOWS

Mark Stevens on FILMMUSIC
ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE APES is the new working title for the 20th Fox sequel to BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES. The film, which began principle photography November 30, was previously titled THE SECRET OF THE PLANET OF THE APES. Kim Hunter again plays the chimpanzee scientist Zira and Roddy McDowall returns as her husband Cornelius, replacing David Watson, who had replaced him in the second film of the series. Paul Dehn's script brings these two through the time barrier to 20th Century Earth in the year 1970. Don Taylor will direct, with assistance from Pepi Lenzl. Frank Capra Jr. is associate producer. William Creber will handle the art direction, and has no chore in creating 1970 Earth on the Fox sound stages. No doubt the economy of moving the setting to present times was not lost on the profit-minded producers. BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES was purported to be a fast buck sequel, but it turned out to be an excellent film nonetheless. That makes ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE APES a fast buck sequel twice removed. Hopefully the high quality of the previous films will be maintained, although the chances for two minor characters like Zira and Cornelius, who were used primarily for "schtick" humor in the previous films, to support the weight of a compelling storyline seem slim. Without Taylor, Brent, Nova, and the future setting there doesn't seem to be much of possible interest here. Only time will tell. Release is scheduled for late in 1971...

BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES looks as if it's going to set off another Great Debate in the grand tradition of the 2001 War. Was it a good film or a bomb? I unhesitatingly cast my vote for the latter. It lacked all the virtues of the original film. It was redundant where the original film was subtle, heavy handed where PLANET OF THE APES had a light touch. The only good thing about the film is its makeup and special effects, and as you know, makeup and special effects never saved a film.