CINEFANTASTIQUE



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ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE APES

ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE APES 20th Century Fox Picture. 5/71. In Panavision and Color by DeLuxe. 98 minutes. An Arthur P. Jacobs (APJAC) Production. Directed by Don Taylor. Written by Paul Dehn based upon characters created by Pierre Boulle. Associate producer. Frank Capra, Jr. Director of photography, Joseph Biroc. A.S.C. Music by Jerry Goldsmith. Film editor, Marion Rothman. Creative makeup design. John Chambers. Unit production manager. Francisco Day. Assistant director, Pepi Lenzi. Special photographic effects. Howard A. Anderson Co. Art directors, Jack Martin Smith and William Creber. Set decorators, Walter M. Scott and Stuart A. Reiss. Makeup supervision, Dan Streipeke. Makeup artist, Jack Barron.

Cornelius Roddy McDowall
Zira Kim Hunter
Dr. Lewis Dixon Bradford Dillman
Dr. Stephanie Branton Natalie Trundy
Dr. Otto Hasslein Eric Braeden
The President William Windom
Milo Sal Mineo
E-1 Albert Salmi
E-2 Jason Evers
Chairman John Randolph
General Brody Steve Roberts
Aide-Capt M. Emmet Walsh
Lawyer Sr.
Cardinal Peter Forster
and

Ricardo Montalban as Armando

love sequels. It harks back, probably, to my weening on the classic Universal horror films, the Frankensteins, the Mummys, the Draculas and others too numerous to mention. When critics despise sequels I wonder if they aren't losing sight of the fact that film is an entertainment medium. and I wonder too, if they were as stuffy as kids as they are as critics. It seems to me that they have let an important part of their enjoyment of film die when they come to regard the simple entertainment film as a low form. The sequel is based on the sound reasoning that if you liked something once, you'd probably like it again and again. This premise certainly holds true for me and probably would for a lot more filmgoers if they could prevent certain of their artistic prejudices from getting in the way of their fun.

This is all in the way of leading up to saying that I like ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE APES very much, and I'm feeling defensive about it. While critical reception of succeeding films in the series has taken a complete turnabout after having shown much enthusiasm for the first film PLANET OF THE APES (1968), my interest has grown with each new episode. I cannot think of any fantasy film series that has evolved as dynamically or as inventively as these three films while maintaining so convincingly a continuous and consistent storyline. The key to my fascination in these films is that they have evolved, and this,

too, leads to my bewilderment at their being dismissed so offhandedly. While they all subsist of the same broad thematic character, consisting in the cooly satirical examination of humankind, each

Scenes from ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE APES now in release from 20th Century Fox. Top: As a token of affection for Zira (Kim Hunter) and Cornelius (Roddy McDowall) and their baby, the circus owner (Ricardo Montalban) puts a medal around the baby's neck. Bottom: Milo (Sal Mineo), Zira, and Cornelius being taken into custody after landing. The series now shows the promise of becoming a science fiction saga of epic proportions.





has done so on its own level; the first film, by utilizing apes that act like humans; in the second, by using future man refined from the worst elements of our character to his ultimate and logical absurdity; and in this new, and third film, by using humans who act like apes, a clever reversal of the motif of the original film. The producers never had additional films in mind during the production of the first two segments (the third does evidence overt planning for a followup), but in making the sequels they wisely chose to extend and further explore the concept of the original film rather than repeat its formula. The result is a rich mosaic that is beginning to assume epic proportions by chronicling the downfall of human civilization in a saga that weaves across the boundaries of both time and space. The characters of the original film have grown and developed and new characters have been introduced along the way, living and playing out their roles against the larger story and passing on to leave it with its lavish interrelated history. Looking back from ES-CAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE APES gives one an excellent vantage point to see where the series has been and how well the pieces begin to fit together, and gives some indication of where CONQUEST OF THE PLANET OF THE APES, the next in the series, should lead us.

The new film has Zira and Cornelius, the personable chimpanzee characters of the first two films, escape the destruction of the earth in the conclusion of the second film with a third ape Milo, a scientist who has revitalized Taylor's old spaceship. Their journey follows the same bend in time which had brought Taylor and Brent to the future and brings them to modern day America. The opening portions of the film are, necessarily, handled in a light vein as the apes acustom themselves to a totally alien culture, but even here there are ominous undercurrents in the story which gradually emerge to turn Cornelius and Zira's promising new life into tragedy. Zira's pregnancy naturally troubles Dr. Hasslein, scientific advisor to the President, who sees it as the beginning of a chain of events that will lead to the future ascendancy of the apes, and while he succeeds in destroying both Cornelius and Zira, their baby, Milo, survives to plague future generations. II CONQUEST OF THE PLANET OF THE APES can fulfill the promise of the earlier films, it will go on to show the rise of ape civilization and its eventual predominance over mankind. This raises a fascinating question: will baby Milo be the cause of the reversal of the natural order, or, having his origins in the future, will he somehow change the course of history so as to avoid emnity between apes and man and the future destruction of earth?

Don Taylor has directed the screenplay's very difficult turnabout in mood, from comedy to tragedy, smoothly and with a gradual ease that evens out the harsh contrasts yet deepens the impact of the concluding portion. However, the chief credit for the success of this film and the entire series must go to Paul Dehn, the scripter of both sequels, who has so imaginatively expanded the original concept until it has gone full circle, from the future into the present and now promises to lead us back into the future again for its, we hope, fantastic conclusion. What we have here is not just three seperate films, but one great work that has the promise of being the first epic of filmed science fiction.

Frederick S. Clarke