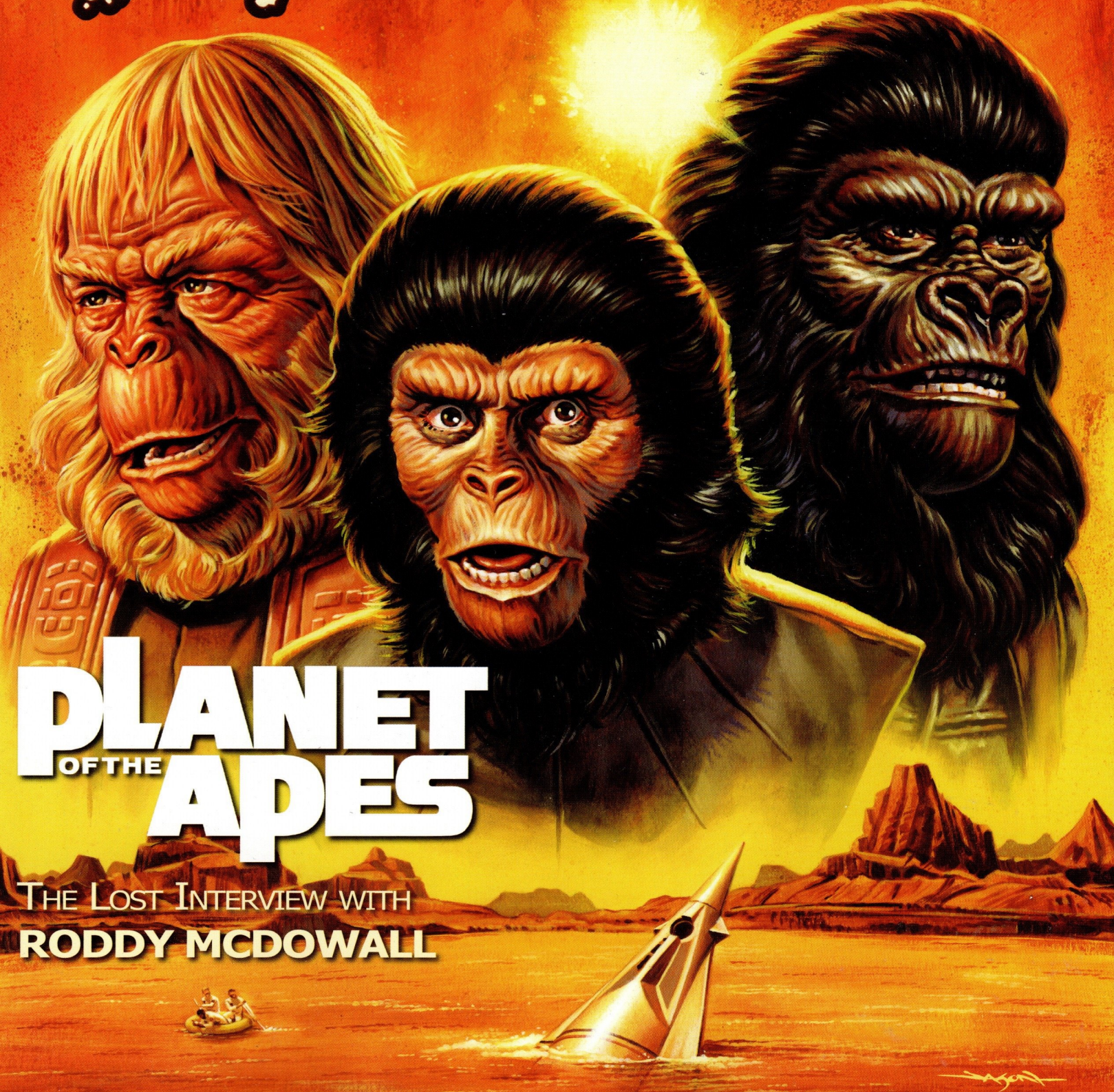


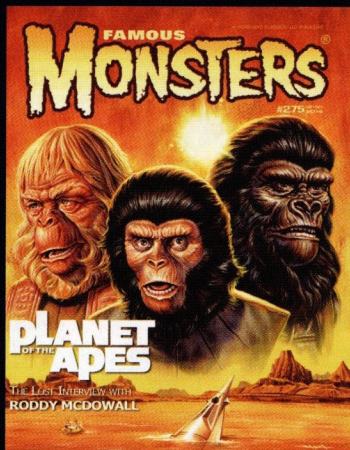
FAMOUS MONSTERS

#275 SEP/OCT
2014

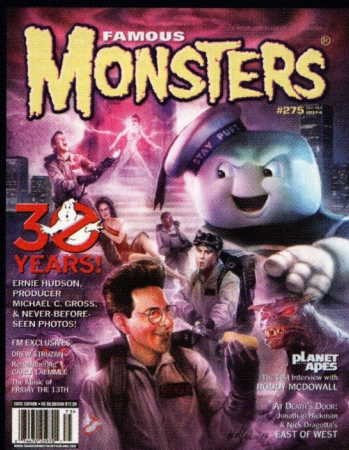


PLANET OF THE APES

THE LOST INTERVIEW WITH
RODDY MCDOWALL



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JASON EDMISTON!



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TERRY WOLFINGER!

OPENING WOUNDS

With 20th Century Fox reigniting the series, we now have the perfect opportunity to share the classic PLANET OF THE APES with new generations. But it also affords an opportunity to address a trend that is becoming alarmingly pervasive in entertainment journalism today.

When talking about APES, it's impossible not to do so without discussing the political and social climate of the 60s that inspired and was woven into the fabric of the series. APES is classic Sci-Fi in that it asks tough questions and holds a mirror up to society by using fantastic creatures and imaginary settings to create perspective. When dealing with topics involving politics, social issues, or religion, we have a strict policy here at FM to keep it factual and historically relevant. No soapboxing. Despite the widely varied political, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds of the FM team, we all agree that it's up to you, the fans, to determine your own beliefs and opinions as well as how and why you want to enjoy your entertainment.

Too many of our contemporaries use entertainment as an excuse to champion their ideologies and pet social causes, often by demeaning alternative viewpoints. They truly believe that their reasons for liking or disliking something are more valid than yours. Let's use PLANET OF THE APES as an example. While it's our job to acknowledge the real world circumstances that reflect and inform the APES series, it's *not* our job to tell you whether you should agree or disagree with the messages APES contains. You may not even consider those aspects of the series ever again. It's entirely possible you'll just be entertained. Maybe you'll be drawn to the incredible makeup work of John Chambers or how the actors were able to create emotion in ape costumes. Maybe you just love Chuck Heston. Regardless, how you enjoy APES—or if you enjoy it at all—is for you to decide, not us. Not anybody else. Worse yet, many try to shoehorn classics into our current social and political climate. Drawing parallels is one thing. Co-opting a piece of entertainment to browbeat your audience is another—intellectually bankrupt—thing.

Forrest J Ackerman created FM as a way to unite all those who loved monsters. It didn't matter if you liked to play sports or if you preferred to stay inside and build Aurora model kits, if you liked monsters—for any reason—you were welcome in the FM family. We believe the same thing today. Whether you like the deeper messages, the scares, the makeups, the stories, or even just the memories of watching monsters when you were younger, FM will always be home to those who call themselves Monster Kids.

Ed Blair
Executive Editor

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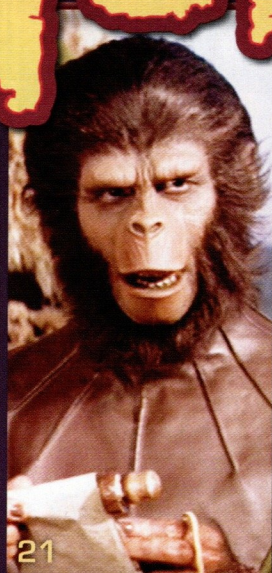
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APES ^{IN} THEIR TIME



by Peter Martin

One morning in late 1973, a small group of pubescent boys sat down in a Los Angeles classroom just before school started. Almost simultaneously, we exchanged smiling glances and asked each other, “Did you see it?!” We burst into excited conversation, which was silenced only after the bell rang and our teacher glared at us.

What had us so excited? We’d all seen the network television debut of *PLANET OF THE APES*.

Modern audiences accustomed to sharing initial reactions via social media enjoy a sense of this enthusiasm, complete with angry retorts from people in different time zones—or those who dare delay their viewing until a more convenient time! But nothing compared, in my young mind, to the overwhelming joy of discovering that, at some point hundreds of years in the future, apes would rule Planet Earth, and humans would be reduced to the lowest rank of servitude (especially all the adults in authority who dominated our lives).

To understand why the APES franchise seized the imagination of millions of young people and profoundly impacted a generation of future filmmakers, though, we need to consider the times in which the apes were born. When it opened in 1968, *PLANET OF THE APES* was not aimed at early teenagers or children, despite a premise that seemed tailor-made for young people. Press agent-turned-producer Arthur P. Jacobs, who claims to have discovered Pierre Boulle’s French language novel (first published in 1963), pitched the movie as a fantastic science fiction adventure, hiring an artist to create paintings that showed cities populated by apes. The pitch was good enough to hook Charlton Heston, then a major international star, but the major Hollywood studios resisted, even with a screenplay by Rod Serling, the redoubtable creator of *THE TWILIGHT ZONE* (the script was eventually rewritten by Michael Wilson). As author Mark Harris wrote in his book *PICTURES AT A REVOLUTION: FIVE MOVIES AND THE BIRTH OF THE*

NEW HOLLYWOOD, “Science fiction was a genre that had almost no box office traction in the 1960s; audiences enjoyed the more outlandish technological excesses of the James Bond movies, but ‘flying saucer’ adventures were part of a B-picture genre that was more than a decade out of style. What Stanley Kubrick was planning with *2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY* was still a mystery.”

Eventually, however, Richard Zanuck at 20th Century Fox warmed to the idea; his studio, too, could use a hit, and the Academy Award-winning Heston brought respectability, if not a guarantee of box office success—especially in combination with veteran director Franklin J. Schaffner, who had worked with Heston before on the period spectacle *THE WAR LORD*. Adding to that a science fiction concept had met with good success for the studio in 1967’s *FANTASTIC VOYAGE*.

As it happens, APES narrowly beat *2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY* to the box office. Opening in February 1968, it garnered unexpectedly good (for a science fiction movie) critical notices, and gained momentum as it expanded throughout the U.S. Initially, the studio positioned it as a serious picture, describing it as “an unusual and important motion picture from the author of *THE BRIDGE ON THE RIVER KWAI*!” Later posters made it sound more sensational: “Man... hunted... caged... forced to mate by civilized apes!” was accompanied by a fetching picture of Linda Harrison in an animal-skin bikini. (It may be that Fox was hoping to draw comparisons to Raquel Welch in *ONE MILLION YEARS B.C.* from two years before.) Another poster with that tagline left out Ms. Harrison and added “Not Suitable For Children” (the MPAA film rating system was not introduced until November 1968).

Anti-establishment sentiment was growing in 1968, and that was reflected in the movies that people chose to see. *THE GRADUATE* reigned as the #1 attraction for six weeks from late December 1967 through early February 1968, when APES toppled it, holding that

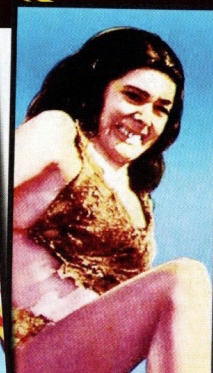
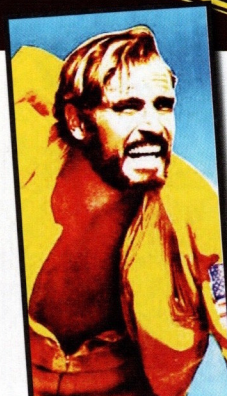
position for three weeks. Word of mouth must have been good. Perhaps that was because it evinced sympathy for the civil rights movement; surely, the fire hoses that the apes used to subdue Taylor (Heston) and the other humans struck a recognizable chord for viewers, who had seen the same tactic used against peaceful demonstrators starting in 1963. Civil rights demonstrations were spreading throughout the country, with protests in South Carolina, North Carolina, and Wisconsin making the news in February alone. Humans are treated as animals in APES, with no rights to speak of; they don't even have the power of speech, which is what makes Heston's character such a threat to the ape establishment.

Certainly Heston felt that they had made a "very good movie," as he states in his autobiography *IN THE ARENA*: "The first APES actually has a philosophical point to make. Commander Taylor ... is a cynical misanthrope, so disenchanted with his fellow man that, perhaps unconsciously, he's exiled himself from Earth, launched through time to an unknown future. The crash of his spaceship strands him in a simian civilization where he finds himself the sole defender of *Homo sapiens* as a superior species." There's no doubt that this philosophical point also resonated with audiences of the time, many of whom probably felt disconnected from a society grown increasingly violent. Martin Luther King was assassinated in early April of that year, followed by the assassination of Robert F. Kennedy two months later.

Studio chief Zanuck thought he knew why APES was doing so well. "It's a different kind of film, something people haven't seen before," he told Heston midway through the film's theatrical release. "There's a wealth of stories there. We have to do a sequel, maybe two." Heston resisted, eventually agreeing to appear in a sequel only out of gratitude for Zanuck's putting himself on the line for the first movie. But he had a major condition: he would only do so if his character was killed off. Zanuck, eager to improve his studio's bottom line, pressed ahead.

Sequels had fallen out of favor during the previous two decades, but the James Bond series, still a box office success after five installments up to that moment, had reawakened

Hollywood to the possibilities. The producers turned to Rod Serling and original author Pierre Boulle for sequel ideas before Paul Dehn entered the picture; he had been a poet before he became a screenwriter (*GOLDFINGER* and others). His script was not entirely satisfactory to actor James Franciscus and director Ted Post, who reportedly rewrote some 60 pages. Nonetheless, the film went into production in February 1969, with a much lower budget than the original in anticipation of lower grosses for a sequel. Released in May 1970, *BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES* featured Franciscus as another astronaut crash-landing, more apes, and mutant telepathic humans living underground. Even though the sequel was, admittedly, a lesser film than the original, it opened at #1 at the box office, a position it held the following week as well, and ended up earning more than three times its budget. Heston says he had suggested a climactic scene involving a doomsday bomb to wipe out the possibility of further sequels—an ending that dismayed both Franciscus and Post—yet the apocalyptic finale proved to be quite timely. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty had gone into effect in March, which meant that "doomsday bombs" were in the news. Days before the film opened, President Nixon gave



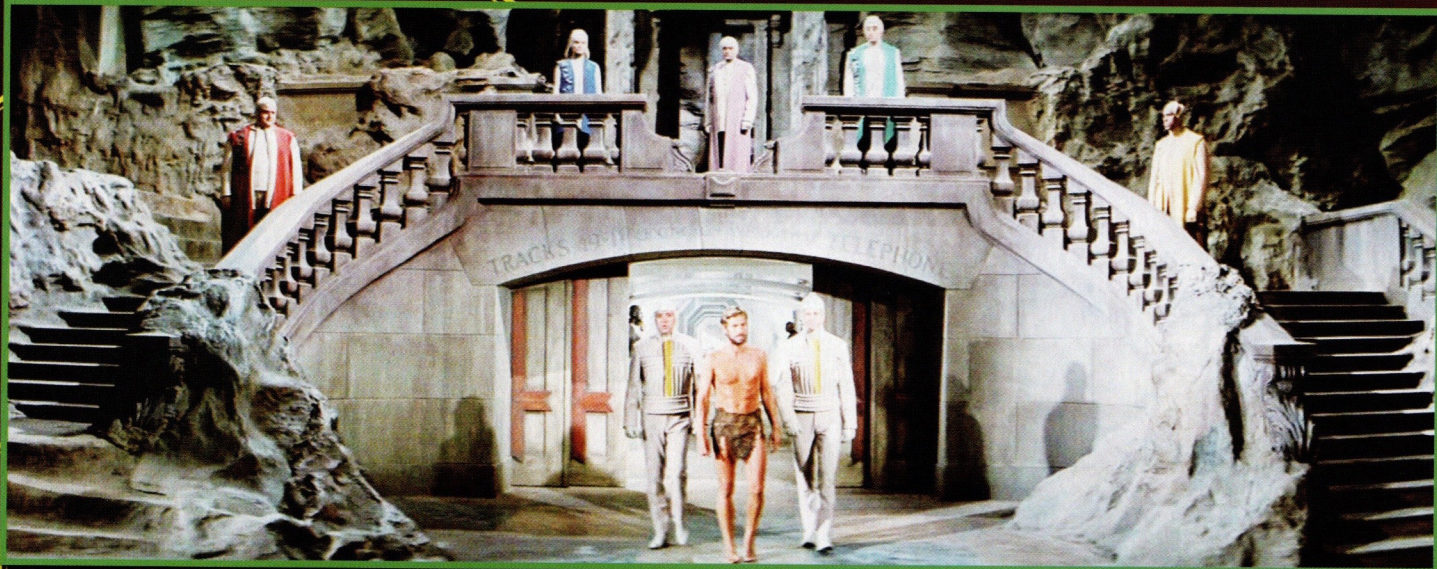
Man..hunted..caged..

forced to mate by civilized apes!



ROLE REVERSAL: The Apes confer about their newly captive human prey, setting an early tone for the theme that would dominate the APES series.





ABOVE: In *BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES*, a new astronaut, Brent, is sent to rescue the original Heston-lead group of explorers. Clearly, things didn't go so well. **LEFT:** Dr. Zaius and his orang counterparts at Taylor's heresy trial, emulating the "See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil" adage.

the order for U.S. military forces to cross into Cambodia, and riots across the nation broke out to protest the possible widening of the Vietnam War; demonstrations continued throughout the month. It was an unhappy time, and the dour conclusion to the film matched the mood of the country.

The next three sequels followed in short order. Though constrained to an extent by ever-lowering production budgets, each reflected a particular vision that either coincided or played against the times in which they were released. With Heston out of the picture and Roddy McDowall back on board—he'd been unavailable for *BENEATH* because of a prior commitment to direct his own movie—Dehn was free to make Cornelius (McDowall) and his beloved Zira (Kim Hunter) the heroes of a story in which they travel back in time to 1973 Los Angeles. When *ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE APES* opened in May 1971, its popular reception was not as warm as the positive critical notices, although it was still profitable.

What made the difference? Producer Arthur Jacobs attributed the lower box office receipts to the fact that some were disappointed by *BENEATH*; he also thought that *ESCAPE*'s being "not so much science fiction" played a role. The film lasted just one week on top of the box office before being swept aside by the John Wayne Western *BIG JAKE*, which suggests other factors were at play. *ESCAPE* revolves around the loving relationship between Cornelius and Zira, but audiences couldn't help but be reminded of the smash hit *LOVE STORY*, which dominated the box office throughout January and February. By comparison, a great love affair between two chimpanzees couldn't compare. Also, the central message of peaceful relations between the races, be they humans or apes, was a bit out of step with audiences who, later in the year, would flock to *SHAFT*, Heston's *THE OMEGA MAN*, and William Friedkin's *THE FRENCH CONNECTION*. What was desired that year, it seems, was a bolder, darker vision.

The following year, *CONQUEST OF THE PLANET OF THE*

APES delivered that vision, although initially it was deemed *too* dark. Jumping forward in time to 1991, the United States is under totalitarian rule, and apes have become the primitive underclass, enslaved to their human masters as service and domestic workers. The world's only talking ape, Caesar (McDowall), has been hidden away from this world for the most part, but when he sees the conditions under which his brethren must labor, he cannot remain silent, eventually leading to an armed uprising. The original ending was too bleak for test audiences, who found the idea of Caesar ordering the execution of humans unappealing.

Still, the film's power is undeniable. It remains the strongest, most enduring entry among the sequels, and rivals the original for its topical relevance. In 1972, two notorious terrorist organizations, the United Red Army in Japan and the Red Army Faction in Germany, were active, and in the U.S., Governor George Wallace of Alabama was shot and paralyzed by an assailant. *THE GODFATHER*, which painted organized crime with a sympathetic brush, dominated the box office from mid-March through early June, when *SHAFT'S BIG SCORE* took over the top position. In this environment, *CONQUEST*'s revolutionary tone should have resonated more strongly with audiences. Hitting theaters at the end of June, though, it managed just one week at #1. Timing may have been an issue; later in the year, audiences flocked to *DELIVERANCE*, the Diana Ross-starring *LADY SINGS THE BLUES*, and even the patriotic musical *1776*, but they were not quite ready to embrace the idea of apes overturning human rule.

If the general populace was resistant to the daring charms of *CONQUEST*, then they were *really* not in the mood for *BATTLE FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES*. In January 1973, U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War was officially concluded, and soldiers began returning home. In May 1973, televised hearings on the Watergate scandal began, and daily newspaper accounts were holding the nation in anxious thrall. At the box office, the first half of the year saw disaster flick *THE POSEIDON ADVENTURE*

and children's movie *CHARLOTTE'S WEB* enjoy multiple weeks atop the list; *BATTLE* swooped in for a couple of weeks in June before being ousted by *LIVE AND LET DIE*, featuring Roger Moore's first appearance as James Bond. Escapist fare was the order of the day, with a strong nod to nostalgia. Who wanted to see a movie about battling apes and humans, especially when the premise recycled the mutants from *BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES*?

Though still beloved by die-hard fans (and children of all ages), the franchise was becoming threadworn, like a favorite overcoat that's been patched one too many times. It needed an injection of new-blooded appreciation—especially among those who had never seen an APES movie. It needed... television. Thus, we come full circle to the debut of *PLANET OF THE APES* on network TV in the fall of 1973, a broadcast that sparked the excited imagination of a generation of kids like me, who never got to see the APES in theaters. The sequels soon made their way to TV as well, and Fox organized "Go Ape!" marathon theatrical screenings of all five films in select cities in the summer of 1974. The network broadcasts led to a TV series in September 1974, which sadly only lasted one season, and then an animated series in 1975.

The *PLANET OF THE APES* legacy is much more than a marketing device to sell toys and hobby kits—though those are fun, too! The premise itself questions authority, as well as man's place in the universe; and all five movies, to a greater or lesser extent, wrestle with these major philosophical points. The combination of deep philosophy—and the topsy-turvy idea of monkeys in charge—has proven to be irresistible for generations of movie fans.



PLANET OF THE APES (2001)

Expectations ran high in the summer of 2001. Having been in various stages of development at 20th Century Fox since 1988, a new installment in the *PLANET OF THE APES* series was finally arriving. Ape-mania had been building for nearly 30 years, and everyone was hoping that Tim Burton was the right director to bring a modern version to the big screen.

Burton wasn't interested in remaking a classic, and he became convinced that the studio didn't want to do that, either. He was moved by the "powerful" and "primal" idea of humans playing apes, so all he wanted to retain from the original was that idea: apes played by good actors. The production budget was, of course, orders of magnitude larger than that of the original films, but even so, there were limits. According to Burton, a lot of work had to be done on the script to bring it in line with the budget.

Burton's *PLANET OF THE APES* enjoyed the highest-grossing weekend debut in that sequel-crazy summer, reflecting a huge amount of pent-up demand for another movie about apes on horseback. The reaction among critics was mixed, and it's fair to say that the twist ending prompted many a raised eyebrow (at least, that was the reaction of my friends and I when we saw the film on opening night). Its reputation has suffered over the years, in part because Fox declined to make a sequel, which signaled that the studio lacked confidence in the future viability of the franchise.

In rewatching it recently, it quickly became apparent that Burton's *PLANET* has gotten a bum rap. It's an effective transformation of a 60s-style action drama into a modern blockbuster showcasing extended action sequences, with more self-aware comic relief. Mark Wahlberg's character is underwritten; he's simply a man going through the paces without any psychological underpinning, which weakens the overall effect. As a leading man, he didn't have the screen presence at that point in his career to compensate, leaving the audience in the lurch as far as a rooting interest is concerned. Yet, it's definitely not as lacking as I remembered. The production design, makeup, and costumes are superior; thanks in part to the much bigger budget, it's a more stylish production. Ape City is transformed into a complex, thrumming, vibrant habitat; the ape makeup is more detailed and looks more authentic. Tim Roth and Helena Bonham Carter make for lively counterparts on opposite sides of the ape/human debate.

The film also deserves points for endeavoring to tell a different origin story, which is probably why it rubbed against my grain at the time. The ending is superior to Pierre Boulle's book, though unable to capture the devastating impact of the 1968 original. All in all, Burton's *PLANET OF THE APES* is a worthy installment in the franchise, even if it now stands alone as an isolated entry in the canon.

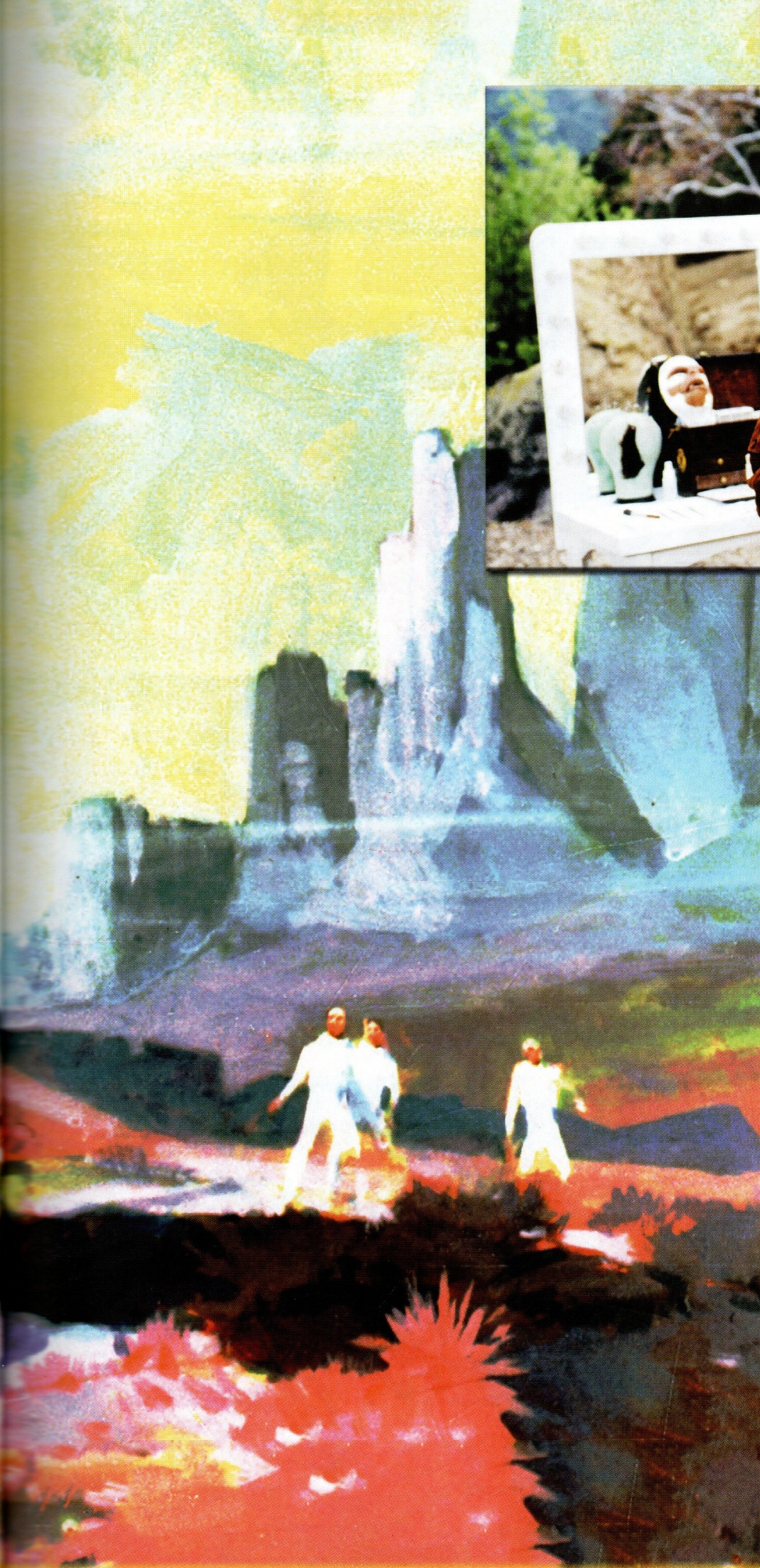


RODDY MCDOWALL: THE LOST INTERVIEW

INTERVIEW BY DAVID COMTOIS • EDITED BY ED BLAIR

Roddy McDowall had a career that spanned six decades and included hundreds of films, television shows, and stage plays. He is fondly remembered for his work as a child in *HOW GREEN WAS MY VALLEY* and *MY FRIEND FLICKA* and later in films like *FRIGHT NIGHT* and *THE POSEIDON ADVENTURE*, as well as his animated voice work in Pixar's *A BUG'S LIFE* and the revered *BATMAN: THE ANIMATED SERIES*. But of all his roles, he is arguably most fondly remembered for the performances where his face remained completely hidden in the *PLANET OF THE APES* series. It was McDowall's portrayals of the kindly intellectual Cornelius in the first and third films, the revolutionary leader Caesar in the latter films, and Galen in the *APES* TV show, that made him the inspiration and beating heart that drives this beloved series forward as it continues to be discovered by new generations.

Recorded on Jan. 27, 1998, less than nine months before his death, this interview with *BEHIND THE PLANET OF THE APES* director David Comtois would be one of McDowall's final pieces of work. Originally featured on a limited edition release from Image Entertainment, the interview has been hidden away for over 15 years. Recently unearthed, this incredibly honest and profound chat with McDowall about his extensive work on the *APES* series was made available exclusively to *Famous Monsters*. It is a testament to the legacy of *PLANET OF THE APES* as well as the dedication and love from McDowall, who championed and celebrated this important work right up until his death. Despite his extensive resumé, McDowall held a very special place in the *APES* series, and opens up in this interview where he discusses, amongst other things, the challenges of bringing *PLANET OF THE APES* to the big screen and the trials and triumphs in make Cornelius and Caesar believable and empathetic characters from behind a wall of makeup.



Famous Monsters. You know about the evolution of the APES project. How did it come about?

Roddy McDowall. I only know what I know, which is that [PLANET OF THE APES producer] Arthur Jacobs was a good friend of mine. Arthur was a very volatile and gregarious fellow with a great tenacity. He had been in PR and he was known by everybody. I, somewhere in the 60s, was on a plane coming back from London with Arthur. We weren't traveling together; we just happened to meet up. And he told me about this project, and swore me to secrecy in relation to the ending. And he said he wanted me to play this character, Cornelius. Well it did sound absolutely fascinating, but I took it with a grain of salt. It was so surreal, a wonderful idea, I thought. As far as I know it had been a project with Warner Brothers. [BREAKFAST AT TIFFANY'S and PINK PANTHER director] Blake Edwards had it.

FM. Jacobs apparently went to a few studios, and eventually Edwards had to drop out of the project. Was there a resistance to science fiction at that time?

RM. Oh, this is science fiction isn't it? I never think of things in that way. No, I don't think so because certainly, in that category, there have been many films that had been very, very successful and ones that haven't been—JUST IMAGINE (1930) was a great flop, which was certainly science fiction. METROPOLIS, which was German, was a big hit in its arena. FORBIDDEN PLANET was successful. So, I don't think it was that. I think the resistance was—number one, it was a very far out premise. And number two, everybody in it,





with the exception of a couple characters, were apes, chimpanzees, or orangutans. The buyer just looked at the seller like they were out of their gourd, you know. But Eddie's [Edward G. Robinson, veteran actor chosen in 1966 to screen test as Doctor Zaius] test proved that a personality could register through this sort of dense makeup. And, if the actor was intelligent and thoughtful, which Robinson certainly was, intent could register. And I was absolutely intrigued because makeup's always been a fascination of mine—and two or three of the best opportunities I ever had on stage involved heavy, heavy makeup, most of which I did myself. And I always found that very inventive. You really disappeared inside the character. The problem with the first film was I came out to do the makeup tests and they put that stuff on my face to take the mask, and in those years it was not like it is now. I'm slightly claustrophobic. And those straws in your nostrils and, and I... [makes a gasping noise] Get me outta here! When it was all put on I began to

hyperventilate. I was really in trouble. And I went back to New York and thought, "I can't do this project. I'll die!" And then I had a long talk with myself, and psyched myself out because I realized the role was one... I mean, you don't get to do those sorts of things. They don't come along. And the challenge was immense, primarily the challenge of registering through all of this immense disguise and making it a part of oneself. And, how to be a human chimp, [chuckles] as opposed to being some asinine monkey or something. I would really have to psych myself out every time I would go into makeup because you had to get onto a different mind bend or you were in trouble. And it could be agonizing unless you applied a certain menu of behavior—you could go bananas. [Laughs]

FM. So you as an actor didn't mind going virtually unrecognized in that part?

RM. I really never had those problems. My ego is in another place. The fact of not being recognized is a compliment to me.

That was, for some people, a tremendous issue of despair. The interesting thing is that during the making of the first film—the content of which was unknown on the lot—there you are, anonymous, and you're going from one spot to another, and the expressions on peoples' faces. You did feel like you were in a zoo. People did begin to look and relate to you, this unknown whatever-it-is, like you were an animal. I know how those poor things felt. You know, being poked at. There were great larky things to do. I remember one time I was in that full drag and everything else, just walking into an executive meeting. I mean, I just walked into one of the big executive's offices. They were all seated, having some big discussion. I just walked right by the secretary, opened the door, went in and sat down. And everybody stopped. They didn't know who it was. It was just a chimp that had come in and was sitting there with everybody. Nobody wanted to look at me. They would have preferred if I was invisible. [laughs] I sat there and then got up and walked out. [laughs] Nobody ever referred to what had happened. [laughs] Another time, Julie Andrews was making *STAR!* And we knew each other very well from having done *CAMELOT* and were very close friends. This was during the first [*PLANET OF THE APES*] movie, so nobody was attuned to the fact of chimpanzees being around. And I remember going onto her set and lying down in front of her portable dressing room and knocking on the door and... [shrieks] She just... No, I didn't have problems about [having my face hidden]. [laughs]

FM. Did being covered up affect the choices of the other actors who played the apes?

RM. Well, I don't think that that is known until after the fact. It's like that old thing, if you say to an actor, "Oh listen, can you ride a horse?" "Oh, sure. Sure I can ride a horse." But they've never been on one, you know? And so they take three quick lessons and go and fall flat on their a--. But the point is, you're game for anything. And it isn't until you're in it that you realize the problems, and those can be translated in various ways. On the first film it wasn't just the appliance that was so difficult to deal with, it was the unknown. We were traveling in no man's land—and the heat! It was made in August. That was unbelievable. Unbelievable! And out on the Fox ranch. It could be like you were literally in a temperature of a hundred and thirty inside that. I can remember thinking I was certainly verging on senility because you can begin to really get dizzy in that sort of heat. Time





and time again, I thought I was going to faint. And people like Maurice Evans [Dr. Zaius], he was valiant, because that was very, very uncomfortable. The whole eating problem. [Ed. Note: Actors in ape costumes had a considerably difficult time eating underneath the extensive makeup] All of those things—because none of that had been thought out. Why should it be? It was an unknown. I certainly didn't realize that I'm allergic to spirit gum. It's always been uncomfortable. But it was a major, major problem. Now, I mean it's so many years later and all these sophisticated sorts of glues have come along. Liquid adhesive was just coming in, but they initially didn't want to use it. I don't know why. But we ultimately did because I couldn't; my skin would erupt. And one had to be very careful with the sort of adhesives or glues that we used. If the skin began to break down there was no road back. Kim Hunter [Zira] was so brave. Her skin was so delicate that putting it on took three-and-a-half hours; taking it off for her took over an hour. Me, I'd just go, "Get rid of it." But you had to be very careful about the maintenance during the day. Otherwise you could be rendered totally useless. If [the makeup] began to move they would have to go in there with orange sticks and glue; and then it became unbelievably uncomfortable. I never ate past seven in the morning, not until it came off. Because if the saliva was

activated, that was a breaking down agent for around here [points to jaw and lips], and it was very difficult to keep all of those very thin edges stuck with glue.

FM. Did they have little makeup pit stops?

RM. Yeah. And one of the things is that actors are so volatile and are, at least most of them, gregarious. Once you had that makeup on it was highly advisable not to speak at all unless it was inside the work at hand—because all of that was an irritant to the preservation of the day. And people forget. I remember it being one time nineteen hours, and my nervous system began to break down because there was no air.

FM. So you didn't have much socializing with the other actors who were playing the apes?

RM. No. You couldn't really. I was usually lying down. After the first movie—I wasn't in the second because I was directing a film in England—but when the third came along, I insisted I wouldn't make another one in the summer. That was just a stipulation. There's no way to think. After having done the first film I did insist that there be an air conditioned trailer to go in and just lie down, to be cool as much as possible between shots. Otherwise, it's a point of no return. And when you get that

exhausted, it's dangerous. If your whole system is just [takes a deep, exasperated breath] wiped out, you can have accidents.

FM. Who designed the makeup?

RM. John Chambers—who's a genius. But that whole crew—after ten years, partly involved with four of the features and the television series—one of the great experiences of my life was the heroic behavior of an army of makeup men who had to turn around—sometimes they'd be off only six or seven hours before they'd have to be back there doing it again. The minutia of it is so extreme. If you make one mistake when you're putting that stuff on you cause just bleeding agony for the person who's wearing it. If the nose piece goes on and your nose is twisted inside that, or when the ears go on wrong, it would be excruciating. And there's no way to take it off and start again. All of that had to be very carefully choreographed by the makeup men. They were terrific. It's very nerve-wracking—three and a half hours, putting this stuff on, and then the toupees and then the laying of the individual hairs over that to disguise it.



Much of the heavy lifting for PLANET OF THE APES would fall on the shoulders of makeup artist John Chambers. Honing his craft on TV series like THE OUTER LIMITS, THE MUNSTERS, STAR TREK, and LOST IN SPACE gave Chambers the knowledge to work quickly, on budget, and with large groups of individuals. His designs had to be believable, practical, and hold up under intense shooting with lots of action.

FM. Heston told us an interesting story; he observed at lunch breaks and things like that where the actors playing apes would kind of self-segregate...

RM. Oh really? [laughs]

FM. ... that within the apes there was sort of a segregation going on.

RM. I used to go and lie down. I usually do at lunch anyway, in order to get a second wind. A lot of them used to eat with chopsticks, you know. Nobody knew who you were if you walked around the lot as

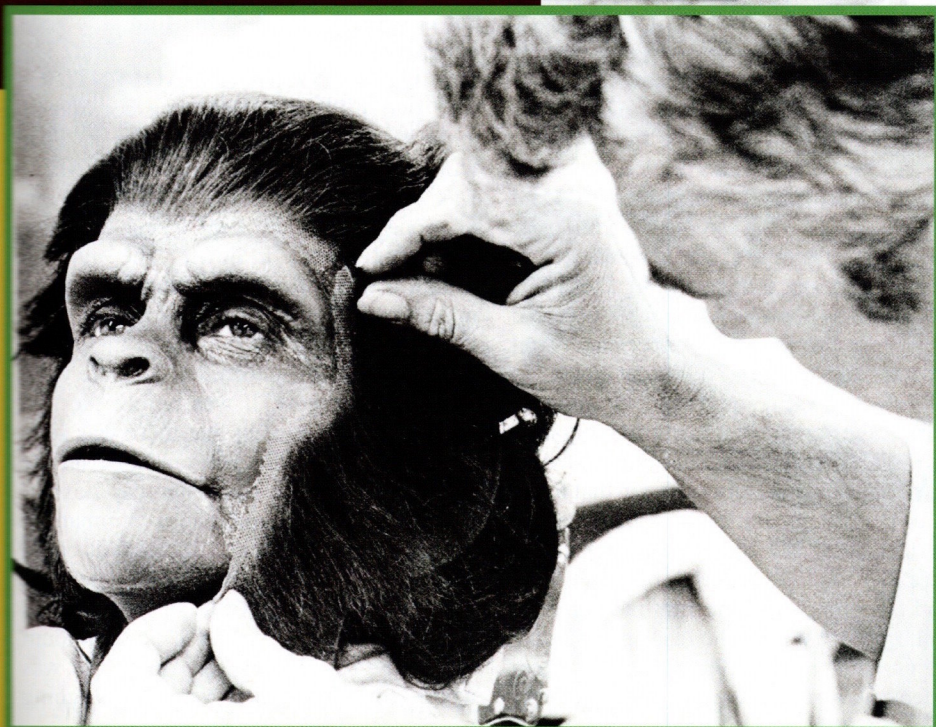
a chimpanzee going [makes ape noises]. People were highly insulted because they didn't know who was doing it. It's just like being out of school, you know, playing hooky. [laughs]

FM. Beyond the makeup, obviously, the character and the story must have attracted you in some ways.

RM. I recall my emotional response to the material, which was that I thought it was awesome. And one of the reasons I feel so

attached to the canon is because what they were ultimately saying is so compassionate and so moving and dramatic, and in many cases, so dear. I think it was one of the reasons it captured the imagination of children to such an immense degree. And I think it's a huge mistake that the various managements for the past three decades have not made more [films in this series].

FM. What do you think makes it so enduring?



Actress Kim Hunter, whose skin was very delicate, would require significantly more time to have her makeup applied and removed than her male counterparts. But her transformation into leading lady Zira resulted in a scene-stealing performance that is universally praised for its depth and humor.



RM. The emotions and the ideas are immediately accessible to an audience, and appreciated. And, it's all wrapped up in the surreal. Right?

FM. Do you think that makes it easier to deal with a lot of the issues?

RM. Mmmhmm. I think a lot of things can be couched inside those parameters that would become blatant, and maybe not as forceful, without the camouflage.

FM. Because there is a lot of satire, especially in the first one.

RM. I never met an ape I didn't like. Wonderful, wonderful, dear, dear things.

FM. The APES films weren't traditional Hollywood happy endings. Was that a certain period in cinema history that you think you could kind of get away with those things and still make popular entertainment?

RM. There's something resoundingly important and impressive about themes that keep telling us that if something odd or unknown comes into our society that, for the most part, there's a great wish to destroy it, reduce it, ridicule it. That's very moving.

FM. And you think that was kind of the

main theme of the films?

RM. It's part of it—the reluctance of the stupid and the injudicious to learn or accept another point of view.

FM. Do you recall who came up with the ending for the first film?

RM. I knew about it on the airplane and was sworn to secrecy. Understandably, because it's a mind blower. Absolute mind blower. I think the filmmaking in the initial film is astonishing. And I can't understand why Twentieth Century Fox hasn't restored and re-released it on a big screen. It's a fantastic production. There's a whole generation... I mean, it's on television all the time. But that's a postage stamp, as opposed to this huge wide screen experience. And that has been proven, in recent years, to be perfectly valid—putting old material back on the screen in its original, gigantic form. It's overwhelming, not only to a new generation who have not seen it in that form, but to the old generation who have seen it and forgotten. It's like going back to an opera. It's familiar material, but absolutely mind boggling. And the filmmaking is so damn good! When the astronauts have that moment in the film where they hear something, and then the audience suddenly

sees what they're hearing—which are these gorillas on horseback—that's wonderful! It's just wonderful filmmaking. He was very good, [APES director Franklin J.] Schaffner. Very, very good.

You know [the studio] had ideas of how to cut down time because the film was very expensive. What did it cost, the first? Do you know? POSEIDON ADVENTURE cost two million, which was considered to be huge. And nobody wanted it. That was considered so excessive. Well, APES was like, five million—a huge amount of money. And they kept trying to figure out ways to cut it down. The makeup situation was, of course, outlandish to the injudicious. Outlandish! They thought, put the makeup on in the studio and then we'll take them out to the location. So there were all these problems. It was before the fact of any public knowing that there was such a thing going on. So you could be on the freeway, and there's another car next to you, and you look and see a chimpanzee sitting in the front seat... [laughs] It could cause a little bit of a disturbance. Then, the next idea was to make us up and take us in by helicopter. I've got a huge amount of footage flying over Los Angeles. It was wonderful. Then they wanted us going



ABOVE AND LEFT: In 1966, APES producer Arthur P. Jacobs would shoot a test for the film featuring Charlton Heston and Hollywood heavyweight Edward G. Robinson in the role of Dr. Zaius. It is interesting to note how the makeup covered far less of the face than the full masks of Chambers' design.

there without makeup and then being made up. All these variations to try and cut down what ultimately, of course, was the thing you couldn't cut down—the makeup time. They were working like Trojans. Now, Frank had to deal with all of these unknown problems. He was like the General of the Army. I never once saw him out of sorts. Never once saw him unkind. I never spoke to him about it. But I felt like something was breaking down in my system on the first film because I would get dizzy and, sometimes, I must have been very difficult to connect with. I remember one day he was asking me, “Is everything all right?”—because I couldn't remember a line. And it was. It was, I guess, heat prostration. [laughs] Something casual like that. But he never chastised. He was a lovely man to work with. Lovely.

FM. Do you recall seeing the film with an audience when it came out, and what the public's reaction was and what the critics' reaction was?

RM. I saw it for the first time in a projection room in New York. That's a very prejudiced area. I don't know if I've ever seen it in a regular theatre. I don't know if I have. Once you've been in a film you don't have the same reaction to the end product as if you're seeing it and you've had nothing to do with it. After all, you know the end. This goes for films I made when I was twelve and thirteen years old. When I'd

go see them I could remember what I was thinking in given scenes. It's like a déjà vu. So you're not seeing just the entertainment; you're seeing a whole complexity of your involvement. So my reaction as audience is technical. It's not visceral. I just know it's a wonderfully made movie.

FM. Do you recall if the success of it built slowly, or did it come out as kind of a “gotta see”?

RM. As far as I remember, both *PLANET OF THE APES* and *POSEIDON ADVENTURE* were instantaneous. It was like an avalanche of success. I think it overwhelmed everybody involved with it. I mean, it was just [makes jet engine noise] and took right off the high diving board.

FM. In terms of the audience reaction towards you, what did it do for your profile as an actor?

RM. Well that's strange, because there's a tendency on a lot of people who are hiring you not to really understand how complex it is to play those roles. For instance, you just





hear a lot of people say in authority, "Well, we don't need him. We can get anybody to play these parts. After all, they're hidden under all this makeup." Of course that isn't true. Because to enhance and override and penetrate through you need a certain acting adjustment and wisdom. You can't just stand up there. It doesn't work. You look like some schlemiel in a funny suit. I don't think on the commercial end that it led to any particular advancement. While it might be admired, how many chimp roles can you play? To this day there's just a huge cult. There was one disturbing aspect. A lot of young girls, pubescent girls, were absolutely desperately in love with a chimp. And that was discomfoting. I mean not with me, but with [Cornelius]. And that used to lead to certain disquieting scenes with the parents of given little girls who needed really to be spoken to. [laughs] Severely. Weirdo.

FM. It's interesting that they didn't take the Irwin Allen approach to try to make every ape a star...

RM. He was a terrific man and equally as tenacious in another way as Arthur was. But *PLANET OF THE APES*, that's another thing that Arthur did—the casting of Maurice Evans was wonderful, just the sheer weight and intangible aura of Maurice was what made Zaius. It gave him a different potency than perhaps somebody else who didn't have that sort of past and that reputation. Not that that was really of legendary content in films. It wasn't. Certainly in theatre it was, but it had a yeast to it that was very valuable.

FM. Because then on the human side you have Heston with a very strong physical presence.

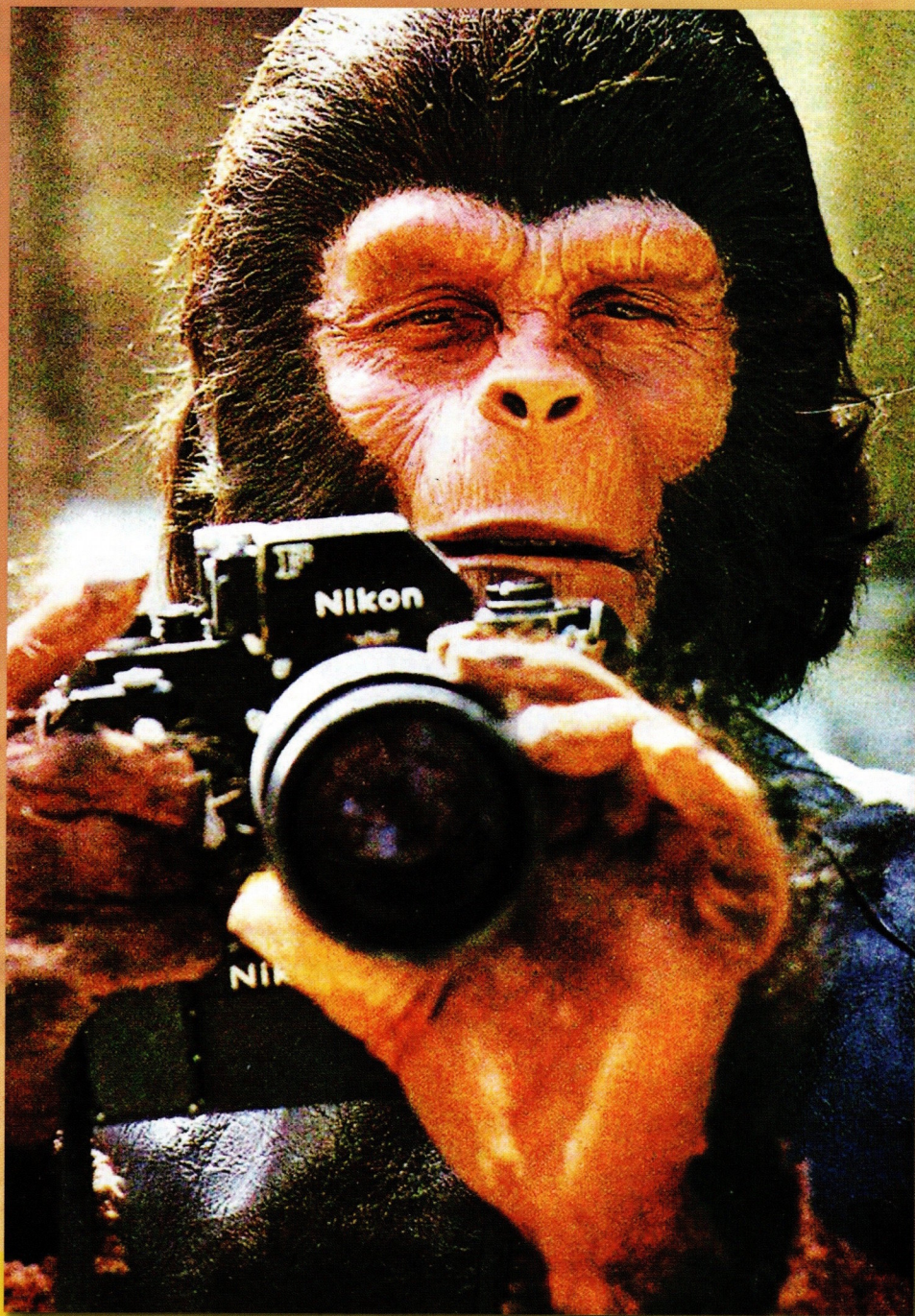
RM. In those years, Heston was one of the five or six bigger stars in films, and he had a monolithic, romantic, legendary reputation. He was top of the heap; and that was terrific that he walked into this unknown area. And there's no way that anybody could say, "Oh well, I knew it was going to be a big hit." It could have ended up being the most foolish looking thing on the face of the earth if all the elements hadn't coincided and melded together. It could have been ho-ho-ho. [laughs]

FM. So he was great to work with on the set?

RM. Oh, I've worked with him before. He's a highly responsible man and a very giving and supportive comrade in work. He really is. He's a great gentleman, too.

FM. Maybe we could talk a bit about the arch of the series past the first one. Now, you weren't in the second one because...

RM. I was directing a film in London. So I wasn't available to be in the second. I've



never seen the second, actually.

FM. That was going to be my next question...

RM. No.

FM. Then you are in the third one. How did they get you back? Because essentially, in the second one they painted themselves into a corner a little bit because they destroyed the world...

RM. Oh, that. A lot of experts are continually trying to rationalize how one gets from one movie to the other. I don't pay any attention to that. You know, it's like saying that Frankenstein came back out after he was buried in ice. [In the second *APES* movie], they destroyed Frankenstein.

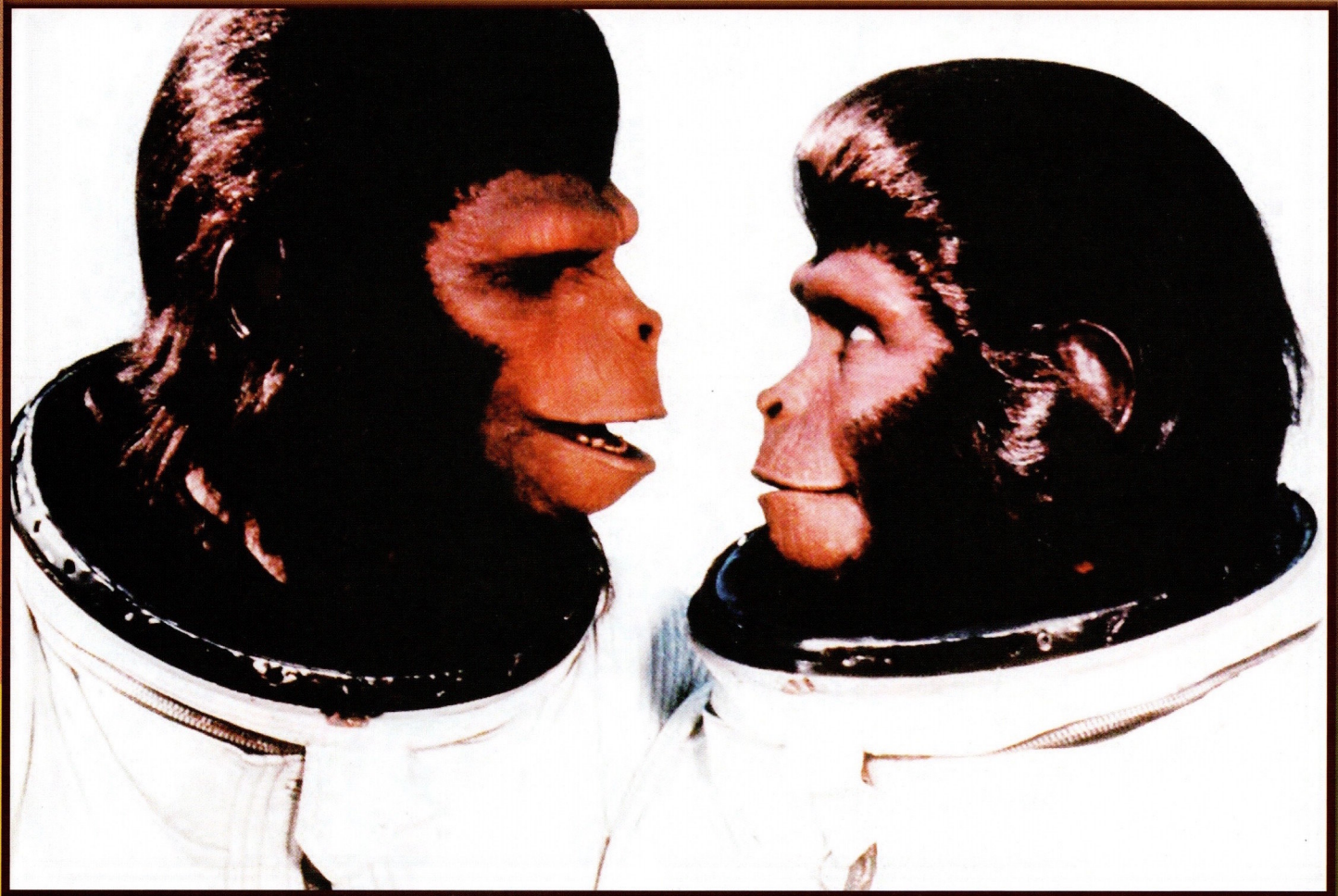
FM. How did they get you back for the

third one?

RM. He asked me. Arthur did. We were great friends and he also he liked my work, which was encouraging. That's nice, because actors are disposable objects. It's like being a fruit picker. You know what I mean? After a season's over, bye-bye. He wanted me to do the second. He wanted me to come back from London. But I couldn't do that—I was too deeply involved in the project I was working on. He asked me do the third and the fourth. He was quite busy at the time.

FM. He was developing a television show apparently.

RM. Oh, yes. In fact, I did a pilot for him, which was disaster—but not his fault—



Cornelius and Zira make a break for the original, human earth in *ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE APES*.

with Stephanie Powers. Of course, we did *TOPPER RETURNS* (1973). And it was a wonderful, wonderful script which the network proceeded to dismember and destroy. And then, of course, disavowed it and claimed no responsibility. He did two or three television pilots and none of them worked. But the network, they were disgraceful toward the material.

FM. How about the transition going from Cornelius to Caesar?

RM. Hooray! [laughs]

FM. Were there changes in the makeup to make a different...?

RM. No! In fact, I had a huge argument with somebody—some press man who came for an interview—who insisted that there was a difference in the makeup between the third and the fourth, and I said, “No, there wasn’t.” It was the same mold. Well, he went on and on, *ad infinitum*, and it was very boring. You know that he really hadn’t thought it out. And the point is that Caesar is an entirely different human chimp with an entirely different lexicon—full of anger; full of hate—that naturally made everything

appear different. Well, [the reporter] went on and on and on and finally I blew up at him and told him that he just wished me to support his preconceived notion. And the fact is it comes out differently because it’s a different character. There’s sort of a huge classical tirade at the end of that film, which was very difficult to do. That film was very difficult to make because it was shot in Century City, at night. And it was in February. It was bitterly cold and I think twenty-three nights in a row, something like that. All night long. And that was dementing for the crew and for the actors. That was really a majestic part to play, and bore no relation to the parental influences, because after all, there were none. He’s brought up by Armando [Ricardo Montalban]. And so he’s a really revolutionary character, crazed with anger and justifiable bitterness.

FM. Did you find him to be a better character to play than Cornelius?

RM. It wasn’t better. It’s just very different and the requirements were on a much bigger canvas than Cornelius. Cornelius is academic, charming, sort of

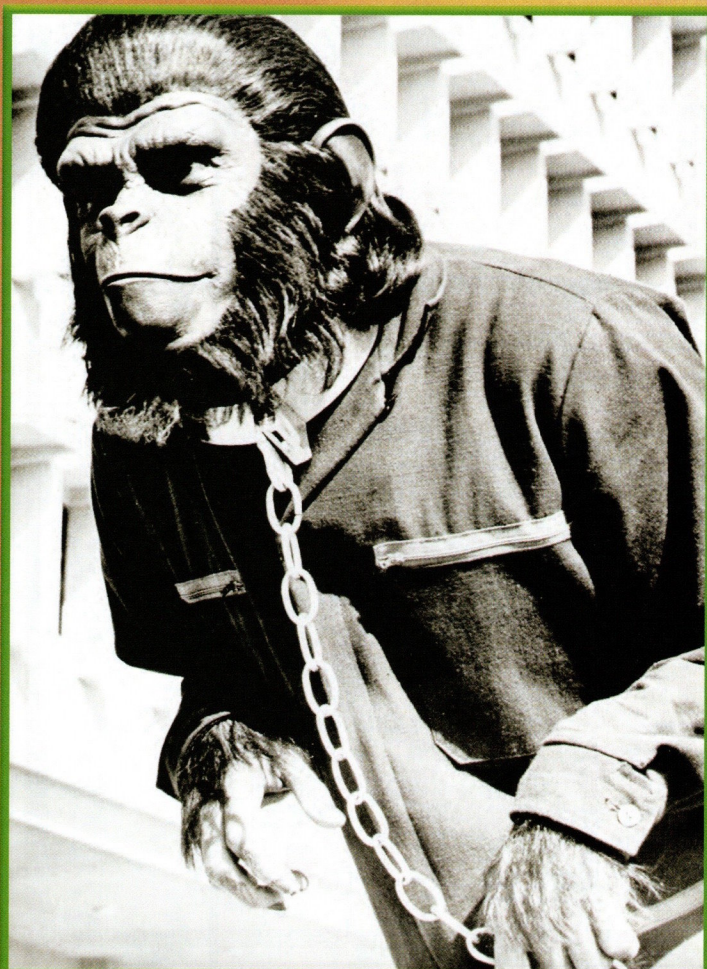
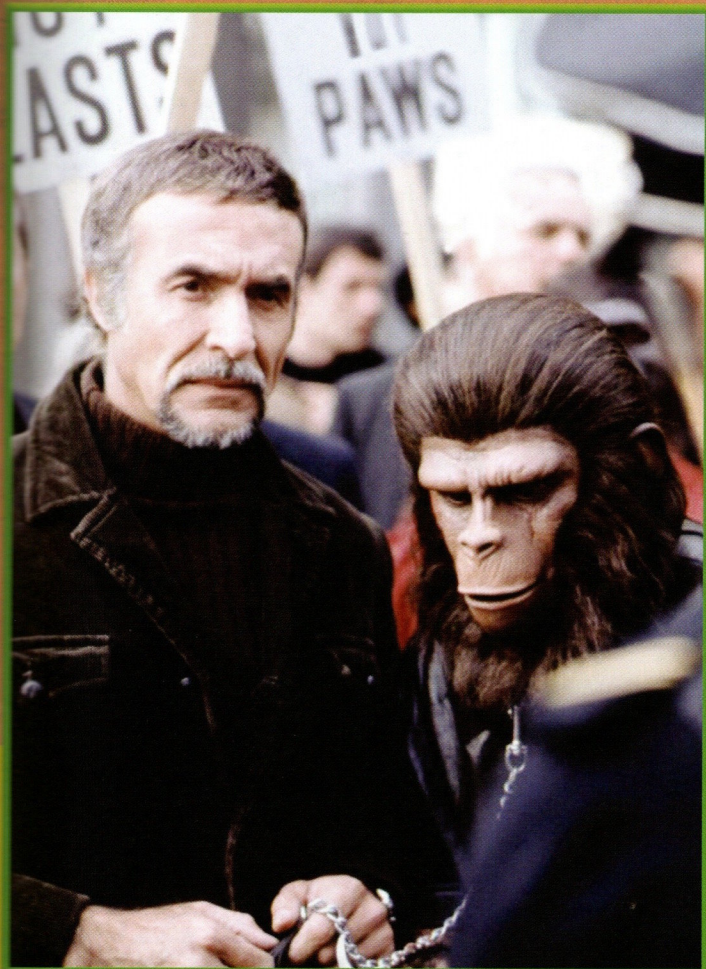
polite to a point of being self-effacing, a very responsible loving father and husband. But the parameters, inside those parameters it’s an adorable character to play, with a very winning personality. But Caesar was a wild man, absolutely wild—which is great to play.

FM. I remember there’s a shot in the movie with you running down Century City with a machine gun... you’re kind of macho...

RM. Well, that makeup is macho. [laughs]

FM. It was so physical...

RM. The big problem on the fourth one [*CONQUEST OF THE PLANET OF THE APES*] was that on the second day I hurt myself very badly. Those feet were very difficult. The big toe was very dangerous because it could catch on things. On a dressing room step mine caught, and my ankle was sprained. And that was very difficult because they had to shoot through it. It had to be in ice all the time and shot with Novocain. And one of the weirdest things happened. There in the wigs—you know where the wigs are being put on, you know the hairpins put in to secure it? One



In CONQUEST OF THE PLANET OF THE APES, Ricardo Montalbon as Armando takes care of Cornelius and Zira's wild and rebellious son, Caesar (also portrayed by McDowall).

of the hairpins scratched my scalp. After a while this huge pain began to assemble. It was just excruciating. It was only when the wig was on. What had happened was that the hairpin, having scraped that dirt, got in and an infection started. And you couldn't see it because of the wig. It was incubating every time the wig was on—and the wig was on for what, twelve, thirteen hours a day. And a cyst grew on my head. That was, I mean, of such pain, I was going to scream with pain. And it grew—and it grew very fast. And finally they had to shut down, which they loathe to do. And it had to be taken out. I think I was gone for a couple a days there. It was the size of a great big marble. And that was very, very painful to deal with. So physically those things were added problems, which you really didn't want to have to deal with because the part was exhausting. The level of energy I needed to play Caesar was entirely different than Cornelius.

FM. How about getting you involved in the TV series? Who approached you?

RM. I asked them. They didn't come to me

about it at all. Arthur was my champion in relation to the films. And he believed there was a difference in the performances if I played them, which was very encouraging of him. But when he was gone, there was nobody that said, "Oh well, we must have Roddy McDowall for the series." I think they would have taken your Uncle Fred, you know, because those initial networks didn't have an understanding of what the ingredients were. Now they may dispute and say that's not true. But that was the truth. I went to them and said I wanted to play it, which cost me dearly. If you go and you say you want to play something, then you're dealt with monetarily from an entirely different power base. They didn't want me. Which is all right, because I got to play it.

FM. When you were filming, was it ever thought that this was going to be the last one, that you weren't going to do another one?

RM. Which?

FM. Any of the films as they kept progressing.

RM. I never think that way. The primary

thing when a project is completed is the old, "I will never work again." [chuckles] That's the mantra: I will never have another job. I don't mean that in a paranoid way; that's just one of the staples that's on the table, to never work again. I used to worry about that until Henry Fonda revealed that he had exactly the same thoughts—and he's one of the best actors I ever saw—exactly the same disease. But I never thought further than the content of the piece of work I was involved with.

FM. So when you were doing the fifth one you had no idea that would be the last?

RM. No. All I remember about the fifth one is that I didn't feel that it had the grit or measure of the other material. But that didn't mean that it should be the last. I've continually thought that there should be another one. Continually. Seems impossible that thirty years have gone by and there hasn't been.

FM. So would you do a sequel?

RM. It would depend on, number one, if I was asked; and number two, what the

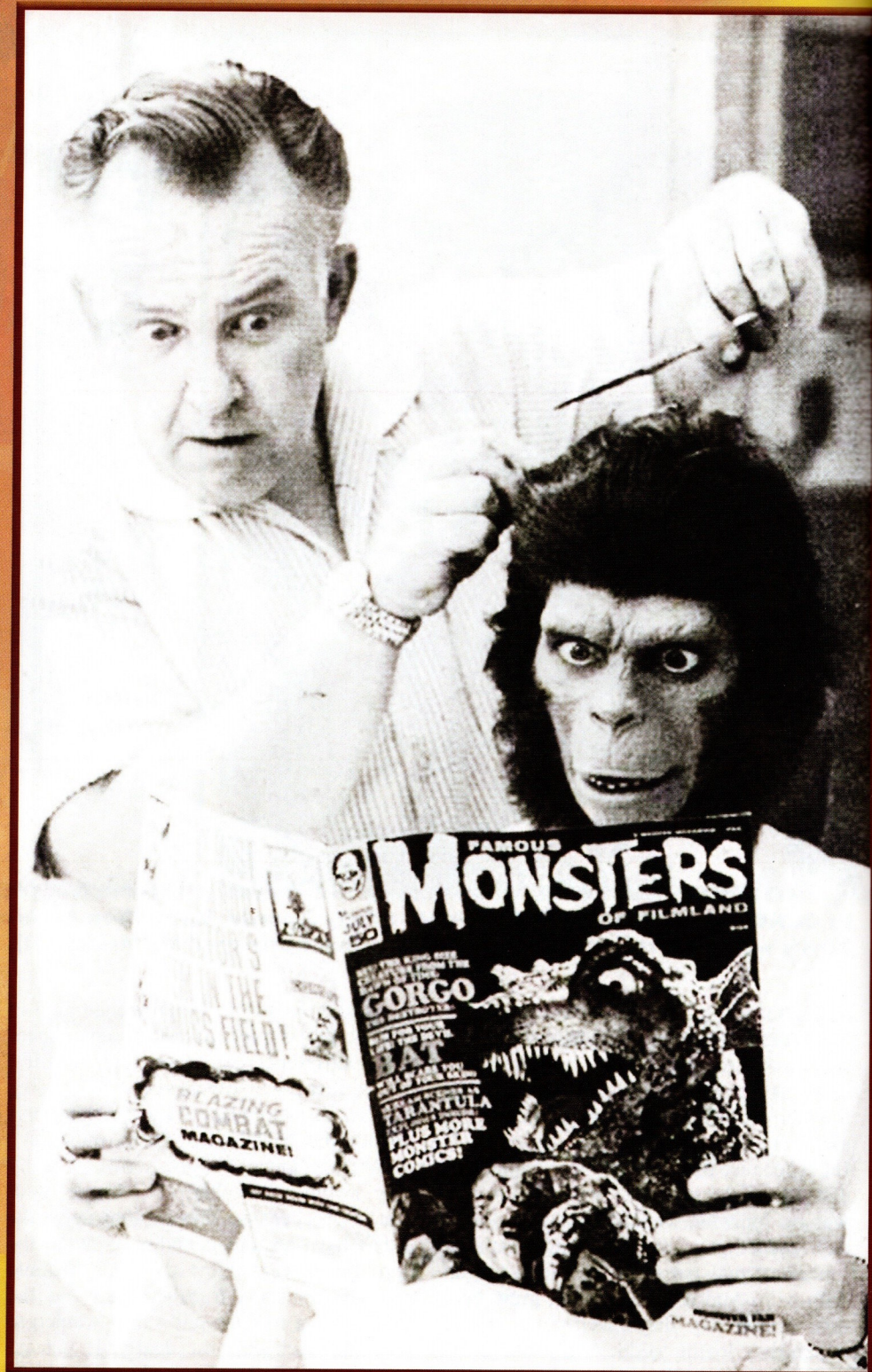
content happened to be. There's no reason to do one just for the sake of doing one. It would depend on whether the material was viable. I know there have been some very good ideas, down through the years, that haven't been entertained. But the idea of making features of STAR TREK was tabled for years, and now look...

FM. Would you rather do a sequel or a remake?

RM. Oh I think a remake is the most ridiculous idea on the face of the earth. Categorically, that is—why do a sequel? No, the original film was brilliantly made; and we know the opening surprise. The end is one of the classic moments of film invention. And even if people haven't seen it, it's one of those subliminals. You know it's somewhere in the consciousness. It's been spoken of so often. The end just blew you out of your seat. It'd be silly to mount however many millions, eighty million dollars, to do the same thing. You can't do it better than that. That was fine. No. Do a sequel, another variation. The Apes in Waikiki or... [laughs] Oh no. The Apes visit Ma and Pa Kettle. Remember Abbott and Costello? You visit Frankenstein or Captain Kidd.

FM. The performances really were breaking a lot of new ground.

RM. Well, yeah! Because it's a collective form you can't do it in a vacuum, it has to be agreed upon and embraced and supported. There's nothing worse if you think, as an actor, of an idea that is bizarre. Or if it becomes bizarre because it isn't accepted. Then you're out on a limb all alone. For instance, Dustin Hoffman, when he played Tootsie—I've never spoken to him about it, but that's an extraordinary invention, that character. Removed from the experience of seeing it, he's not a believable woman. However, a lot of women we know are not believable women. And that's what's so great; you could believe anything as long as the person playing it believes it. And what he did was absolutely brilliant. Absolutely wonderful. Like Jack Lemmon's creation in *SOME LIKE IT HOT*, where he doesn't want to be the girl, and then suddenly takes off like Charlie's Aunt. Girl's gotta think of her future. That's because the actor believes and has found some release in climbing inside the parameters of the character he's created. But that's no good if the director isn't there supporting and honing and gardening what you're doing. And that's why Schaffner was, I mean personally, such a terrific guy to work with. He could have shot it down and one wouldn't have been able to function.



FM. Yeah, that's such an integral part of the performance. You can see that there was a lot of thought put into that.

RM. Well, it wouldn't work any other way. It's strange, they couldn't get a word out without having a home that it came from that seemed logical. That's one of the great things about being an actor when you have the opportunity to play something that is really totally original. Because after all, one wasn't playing a chimpanzee, one

was playing an evolved creature that had those beginnings. You could go and sit in the zoo for as long as you wanted—you weren't playing that. You were playing something that had matured into some other expression. And reaching that decision was a fascinating journey, and that's sort of the joy of being in the line of business you're in. Because it hasn't been graphed before—you can't find it in a book. You have to think it up.

SIURTEXT PLANET OF THE APES

REMOVING THE FRAME FROM THE SEQUELS' SOCIAL COMMENTARY

BY DAVID E. CHAPPLE

In the third film of the original Planet of the Apes series, *ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE APES*, Dr. Otto Hasslein (Eric Breaden) explains to real-life news anchor Bill Bonds the structure of time travel by using a painting of a landscape, then pulling back to reveal the painter painting the landscape, and on into infinity. This metaphor is also apt when looking back at the series of APES sequels and the landscape they were reflecting, as well as the artists who painted them. Much has been said about the seminal and first *PLANET OF THE APES* film, about its commentary and take on the issues of the day (1968). But two of the following films, *ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE APES* and *CONQUEST OF THE PLANET OF THE APES* (the two middle films in the original five film series), arguably have not been given their due. These are the two films that spun the series on its head and brought the issues it examined straight home to contemporary America.

Social commentary has been the heart of science fiction literature since Mary Shelley's 1818 novel *FRANKENSTEIN*. On television, too, this commentary is part of science fiction, most notably on shows such as Rod Serling's *TWILIGHT ZONE* and Gene Roddenberry's *STAR TREK*. Both series are known for their stories being "about something". In *STAR TREK*, social issues are dealt with in a futuristic setting, removed from contemporary figures and times, allowing the viewer to examine the issue rather than the person behind the issues. Rod Serling was known for his socially conscious television plays such as *PLAYHOUSE 90* and *STUDIO*

ONE, and his filmed anthology series *THE TWILIGHT ZONE* also continued to speak on issues of the day by using the science fiction template, which is a "comfortable" way to convey tough and controversial political and social issues to audiences.

This concept came to full fruition in the five original *PLANET OF THE APES* films released between 1968 and 1973. In fact, although the budgets were slashed significantly with each successive sequel, the original films were studio pictures that still had, at their core, something to say. These films also had a lot in common with some of the smaller budget films of the 1970s that were political and subversive. *CONQUEST* came out in the wake of the Kent State shootings and the Watts riots, and also had a lot in common with Haskell Wexler's hybrid documentary/drama *MEDIUM COOL* (1969), which was filmed in Chicago in the tumultuous year of 1968.

The release of the original *PLANET OF THE APES* was on February 8, 1968, and while it was still playing in theatres across the country, Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated on April 4. Wexler was filming *MEDIUM COOL* at the time, and captured the funeral preparations and placed his actors in the middle of it. When riots broke out in Chicago in the aftermath, Chicago Mayor Richard Daley gave the order to the Chicago Police Superintendent



to "Shoot to kill!" to stop them. Later that year, Robert F. Kennedy was assassinated on the other side of the country in Los Angeles, where the third and fourth APES films are both set. All of these events, and more specifically the 1965 Watts Riots, permeate the first four films in the series.

One of the main issues of the first APES film is our fear of nuclear holocaust (a very familiar fear in the 1960s) and its ramifications. The film examines racial and class structure as well. The three castes of apes in the film hold different statuses in their society: the gorillas are brute

muscle, chimpanzees are the scientists and intellectuals, and the orangutans are the ruling aristocrats. All three hold prejudices towards each other. **BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES** (1970) carries the nuclear bomb metaphor along from the first film, but also uses it as a platform for commentary on religion. The underground society of humans are mutants, forever scarred by the bomb that destroyed New York City—yet they now worship the last remaining doomsday bomb as their god and savior. Because of the revelation that the forbidden zone is populated by humans, the gorillas decide to conquer the area and rid their world of humankind once and for all as an act of self-preservation. Here, the metaphor of the Vietnam War is utilized by having the younger generation of apes with picket signs protesting the ape war of aggression, complete with placards reminiscent of ones seen during the Vietnam War protests across the country. The film ends with

the expansionist gorillas attacking the human mutants, setting off the doomsday bomb, and destroying the world. Paul Dehn (**GOLDFINGER**), the writer for the four sequels, was no stranger to the subject of nuclear holocaust, having been traumatized by the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings. It was his poetry on the subject that brought him to the attention of producer Mort Abrahams.

ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE APES (1971) opens in the near-present day of 1973 in California as Taylor's spaceship from the first films washes up the beach. The three astronauts turn out to be three apes who escaped the Earth's destruction in the previous film. Cornelius, Zira, and Dr Milo are now the strangers in a strange land, the direct reverse of Taylor in the first film. Prejudices of our time are visited in the Dehn script, as well as issues dealing with feminism and euthanasia by government fiat—the latter being a reminder of the first film, as Dr Hasslein learns of the potential destruction of the Earth from an inebriated Zira one night. To Hasslein, the only way to prevent the outcome is to abort the pregnancy of Zira and Cornelius' unborn child. There is a trial by the ruling class in

a Presidential Enquiry, and the decision is made to carry out the state-sanctioned abortion.

One of the themes in **ESCAPE** that was carried over from the first film's script by writer Michal Wilson is that of characters being put on trial in front of a governing body of politicians. In the first film, part of Wilson's inclusion of the show trial scene was rooted in his own experiences of being put on "trial" during the McCarthy Hearings in the 1950s, an effort by politicians to dispose of the perceived threat of communists in the entertainment industry and America in general. In the first film, it is Taylor who is put on trial in front of the ruling class Orangutans led by Dr Zaius. In fact, the HUAC hearings and blacklisting are a common denominator among some of the film's makers and participants. Michael Wilson, who wrote the first **PLANET OF THE APES** script, was also the writer of **BRIDGE ON THE RIVER KWAI**, but was blacklisted at that time and his name was not on the Best Screenplay Oscar for that film. Kim Hunter (Zira) had also been blacklisted as a result of her being



From humans in chains to protests and courtroom drama, the social undertones of the series helped to carry the film beyond the standard Sci-Fi fare of the time.





named in the HUAC trials by a former director.

Whereas the fear of the nuclear bomb was the major issue at the forefront of the first two films, the following films, by their very nature of being set in the contemporary world, dealt with the down to Earth and present day issues that people were actually experiencing in their homes and neighborhoods. In the same year that the first APES film was released, several events occurred that would influence and culminate in CONQUEST: the assassination of Martin Luther King, the assassination of Robert F. Kennedy, and the infamous 1968 Chicago Democratic Convention. In bringing the apes to the present day in his script for ESCAPE, Paul Dehn was able to examine these issues practically in real time.

CONQUEST OF THE PLANET OF THE APES (1972) is the much darker and more biting film in the series. It is also the film that almost didn't get the G rating because of the original cut's violence and gore. It is considered by many to be the best of the original series' sequels, and indeed has the most to say about society during the time of its making. By setting the film in the turbulent city of Los Angeles, the filmmakers were able to directly examine the racial tensions that were being dealt with in the early 1970s.

The film picks up 20 years after baby Milo was left calling for his mama at the end of ESCAPE. He is now full grown and speaking, a high crime in the oppressive fascist society of 1991 Los Angeles. (Ironically, the film is set in the cold and futuristic sharp-angled concrete known as Century City, the paved over former backlot of MGM Studios that had to be sold to keep the company from bankruptcy in the aftermath of box office bombs and cost over runs by the former studio heads, and the cause of the delay in the first film from being greenlit.) The plague, as predicted, has wiped out all dogs and cats, resulting in apes being taken in as replacement pets, but over the years people realized that apes were semi-intelligent and therefore are now trained as servants and slaves. Milo, now named Caesar, is introduced to this world by circus master Armando (Ricardo Montalban) and soon witnesses and is appalled at the treatment of the apes by their human masters and shouts out at the human oppressors, resulting in Armando getting interrogated by authorities and killed, and Caesar, whose secret is out, being tortured. Soon Caesar escapes and infiltrates the ape training facility and begins to teach them to arm themselves and fight back, eventually leading an uprising and revolution against the human slave owners.

One of the defining moments for filmmakers of CONQUEST were the Watts riots of 1965. In the movie, director J. Lee Thompson took great pains to shoot the end riot and ape takeover to make it reminiscent of news footage of that event. As originally filmed, the film was violent and disturbing, bringing the news footage of the day from the small television to vivid color on the big screen. There was no shutting off the television or switching channels here, and the audience had no choice but to deal with and think about what was happening in front of them. In fact, the images were so disturbing to some people at a test screening in Phoenix that filmmakers had to recut the film, removing much of the in-your-face violence, and even changing the ending to be more optimistic in order to get a G rating. The original ending had the Caesar-led revolution violently winning against Governor Breck and setting the stage for the takeover of the apes. The new ending, with a voiceover by Roddy McDowall, had Caesar making a benevolent speech about how the apes would rule with compassion instead of violence.

Thompson took great pains to shoot the film to convey the oppressive state the world was in at the time. The opening shots of the film have black leather boots in the foreground with the ape slaves framed



In CONQUEST OF THE PLANET OF THE APES, MacDonald (Hari Rhodes) pleads for mercy on behalf of the governor. In the original ending, available on Blu-ray, the governor is violently killed.

between them. Many shots in the film have objects blocking the frame such as bars, chain link fences, and walls, evoking the feeling of the apes being in cages.

It is also no coincidence that the production design and costumes evoke Nazi iconography. Thompson purposely shot the film to evoke fascist Nazi memories. Even actor Don Murray, who plays fascist Governor Breck, spoke fluent German, translated his own script into German, and rehearsed his scenes in that language to help give the feeling of the Nazi delivery in his speeches, as he felt that Breck would have fit perfectly in the setting of Nazi Germany. Clad in all black and wearing a turtleneck, he was a severe figure indeed. He is literally up to his neck in darkness. Almost all the human characters in the film are either clothed in all black or muted shades, while in contrast the only color is seen on the apes, who wear red, green, and yellow jumpsuits.

Roddy McDowell had been with the APES series since the beginning (except for *BENEATH*) playing chimpanzee Cornelius, his extraordinary skill as an actor coming through the thick make-up evoking tremendous emotion and praise from audiences and critics for his performance. But it was his portrayal of Caesar in *CONQUEST* that really brought all his skill as an actor to bear. In the film, his character runs the gamut from

innocent, sheltered, and naïve to showing anger at seeing the treatment of the slaves, sadness upon learning of the death of his adopted father Armando, and resolution as he begins to gather apes together for a revolt against their slave masters. It is a mesmerizing performance, 180 degrees from his portrayal of Cornelius. It is quite extraordinary that when watching the performance you don't even look at the makeup, but look at the character of Caesar. You are totally invested, mostly because of McDowell's performance. As the main character and focus of the picture, McDowell, a 40 year old actor, had to convey the twenty-something year old's predicament in a society in racial conflict.

While Jerry Goldsmith, who had scored the first and third films, was not to return for *CONQUEST* and *BATTLE* because of budgetary reasons, composer Tom Scott would pick up the baton for the two remaining films. His score for *CONQUEST* would be excised significantly in the editing process, but what remains is powerful stuff, sounding like rattlesnakes amid metallic percussion during the attack on Breck's Ape Management "Roman Legion" riot police. Many of the instruments sound as if they were being played on their helmets and riot shields. In the end, when the apes beat Breck to death with their rifle butts, a reprise of Goldsmith's *PLANET OF THE APES* score makes a return among

the shouts of the apes, signaling the end of humanity's rule and the birth of the planet of the apes.

Much like messages in science fiction and in *CONQUEST OF THE PLANET OF THE APES*, the power of context is the theme of Haskell Wexler's *MEDIUM COOL*, which can be considered a spiritual, contextual, and conceptual brother to *CONQUEST*. In fact, as Eric Greene points out in his book *PLANET OF THE APES AS AMERICAN MYTH*, Breck's "Kill!" order to annihilate the apes' "threat" echoes Mayor Daley's "Shoot to kill!" order to the Chicago protesters during the Democratic convention of 1968—which is of course where Wexler's *MEDIUM COOL* is set. APES producer Arthur Jacobs, Rod Serling, Thompson, and Wexler were socially and politically conscious filmmakers that were witnessing the same events and had similar ideologies. It is surely no coincidence that their films and television work reflected the same events and views.

The *PLANET OF THE APES* films have always been a reflection of the time and culture we live in. The Hasslein painting demonstrated by Dr. Otto Hasslein (Eric Braeden) is a prime example and arguably illustrates how commentary in film works. In context, it is demonstrated as an explanation of time travel, but on the subtextual level it can be used as a metaphor, as art reflects the cultural landscape. The filmmakers of the APES series were artists looking at the time and reflecting back on what it all meant. Now, in 2014, we are the spectators looking back at the films and at the artist(s) making the work of art that was in turn painting a reflection of the issues that society was dealing with. The artist and the subject are both the observer and the observed.

In the final moments of *MEDIUM COOL*, the crowd of protesters at the 1968 Democratic National Convention chant to the news cameras, "The whole world is watching! The whole world is watching!" It is a message that can only be delivered by the power of world cinema. And one wonders, if the apes in *CONQUEST* could speak, would their chants at the end of *CONQUEST* be the same: "The whole world is watching! The whole world is watching!"

In his commentary to *MEDIUM COOL*, Haskell Wexler says, "When we say 'the whole world is watching', I feel that somebody else is taking a picture of us taking a picture."