

Femme Fatales

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**JERI
RYAN
BORG
BABE**

**FEMMES OF
"SPECIES 2"**

**SHARON STONE
ON "SPHERE"**

**LINDA HARRISON
SUPERNOVA**

Volume 7 Number 2



Femme Fatales

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VOLUME 7 NUMBER 2

The Luscious Ladies of Horror, Fantasy & Science Fiction

JULY 1998

2:10 AM. Wrapped another issue. Time to uncork some sake (for me) and pop a can of Diet Pepsi (for Jenny). We vowed to discuss the advent of New Age sapphism and its bond with sci-fi in the next millennium. Instead, we shifted into a hostile argument regarding which of THE SIMPSONS episodes qualified as the best of the series. Jenny's favorite? *Itchy & Scratchy Land*. Sure, it's undeniably funny, lampooning WESTWORLD & Disney mercenaries, etc. But it can't compare to my fave, the classic *Homer Goes to College*. It's an indictment of U.S. education. However, Jenny, the self-professed sovereign of Springfield, gauges it as "slapstick."

2:31 AM. But first: compliant with the requests of our readers, Laura Schiff is developing a web site directory entirely related to *femmes fatales*.

Second, the lesbian lifestyle is no stranger to this magazine, what with profiles of actresses who played gay characters. And, yeah, we've often probed into femme/femme bonding (i.e. Brinke Stevens' "Vampires & Alternate Lifestyles," 4:1)—particularly Hammer films' Gothic mythology—as partially a denunciation of a sexually prohibitive society (though Dracula was a female liberator, he was still a male monarch). But, rather than listen to yours truly drone on, why not sample *Girlfriends* magazine? The staffers are more qualified to broach these relationships because—news flash—they're lesbians! The writing ranges from gossip to acerbic to analytical (Judith Halberstam's scathing reviews of G.I. JANE [4:8] and CHASING AMY [4:2] hooked me.). Dial-up 800-GRL-FRND for subscription info. If you want to learn more about the lifestyle and its variable translations in the media, beyond ELLEN and *Penthouse* videos, check-out *Girlfriends*.

3 AM: FF staffers are split on SIMPSONS. Michelle Bauer's favorite episode: *Call of the Simpsons*. Brinke Stevens faves are "all of the Halloween episodes." Julie Strain insists "it's *Marge Vs. the Monorail* ('I call the big one Bitey!')." Be here next time when Jen & I square-off about favorite our Tarzan movies. It's gonna be a dogfight.

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SUPERNOVA LINDA HARRISON

CAST AS THE HEROINE IN "PLANET OF THE APES" AND ITS SEQUEL, THE EX-STARLET RECALLS THE CONTROVERSY.

BY BRUCE G. HALLENBECK

During that mad, mad, mad decade of the '60s, she was an icon right up there with Raquel Welch, whose own voluptuous body—photographed for ONE MILLION YEARS B.C.—put a serious squeeze on a teeny fur bikini. Linda Harrison was also "into" fur, pouring her curves into a primitive, makeshift bikini and fraternizing with apes! Ms. Harrison—a former Miss Maryland—is indelibly linked to PLANET OF THE APES, a 1968 sci-fi classic, and its '70s sequel, BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES: she was cast as Nova, a mute, renegade human, in both films. Her celebrity is so firmly locked in the monkey movies that Harrison's past work—including BRACKEN'S WORLD, a 1969 series that foreshadowed CHARLIE'S ANGELS—has been forgotten.

Harrison is back in Maryland: semi-retired, she retreated from the limelight to raise a couple of sons who are currently occupied with the production of movies. I recently caught up with the beautiful brunette at her home, which is nestled in a quiet little town not far from Baltimore.

"Maryland has always been my real home," she told me. "And be-



Linda Harrison, starlet 1966. "I knew that, married to [producer] Dick [Zanuck], most of my film roles would come through him."

ing Miss Maryland was my catalyst to go to L.A. Agent Mike Medavoy discovered me and took me to 20th Century-Fox. The first film premiere I went to was THE AGONY AND THE ECSTASY ['65]—and I wasn't even in the movie!" Pretty heady stuff for a resident of Berlin, MD, population 3,000. "Yes, it's true," Harrison continued, "but when I was a child, I dreamed of being in show business, so, for me, it was a culmination of that dream. I went to New York to do some modeling, and when I got back, I entered the Miss Maryland contest—and won."

She debuted in Jerry Lewis' s-f comedy WAY...WAY OUT ('66): Harrison shared a brief cameo with the future Mr. Barbra Streisand, James Brolin. Then along came A GUIDE FOR THE MARRIED MAN, a comic compendium of extramarital vignettes directed by actor/hoofer Gene Kelly: Harrison performed another minor role, as "Miss Stardust," this time around with Carl Reiner.

"But I must tell you, that I was a blonde femme fatale in an episode of BATMAN," Harrison revealed. "I played a cheerleader. I can't remember much about it, but I think it was called *The Joker* [*The Joker Goes to School*,



Charlton Heston and Harris, PLANET OF THE APES. "Charlton was a strong, nice man who showed me how to handle the ropes. Nova, my character, was a gentle spirit. I liked her: she's different from anyone else in the film."

3/2/66].”

But her tenure as a starlet, perpetually playing somebody's squeeze, drew to a merciful conclusion. She had briefly crossed paths with Charlton Heston at the *THE AGONY AND THE ECSTASY* premiere. Heston had a pretty good reason for showing up: he was cast as Michelangelo in the film though Harrison prefers to remember him as “BEN-HUR. I had been really impressed with Charlton when I saw that film at age 16. I thought he was fabulous. The chance to be in a major film opposite him was a dream come true. Our paths had crossed at the premiere, of course, and he was a good friend of [producer] Richard Zanuck's, who I had begun dating. I was under contract to Fox when *PLANET OF THE APES* came along. Yes, I was dating the head of the studio—but I had to audition just like everybody else.”

In fact, Harrison initially auditioned for the role of Zira, the empathetic ape eventually played by Kim Hunter. “I took part in a screen test. The movie was very controversial at the time, there had never really been anything like it before. We all knew that it would either sink or swim. Fortunately, we had a really good director in Franklin J. Schaffner and he ended up casting me in the part of Nova.”

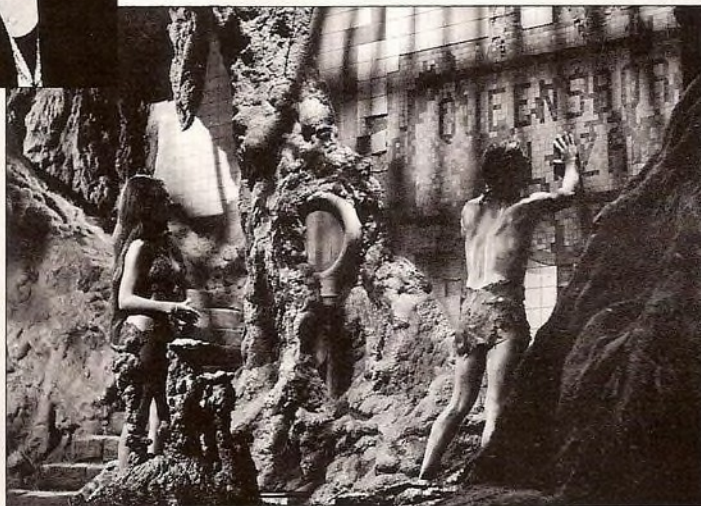
Any significant differences between both *APES* movies? “There was a difference between the two directors. Schaffner never told anyone but the cameraman what the next setup would be. He kept an element of surprise. He knew we were doing something unusual and he wanted us to be fresh. It was hard to do, but it was really quite a brilliant technique; we all did our very best for him.”

And Harrison was not disappointed with her costar. “It was terrific working with Charlton. He was really nice to me. I was a novice,

“PLANET OF THE APES was controversial at the time. We knew it'd either sink or swim. But we had a really good director in Franklin J. Schaffner.”



7: Charlton Heston and Harrison on *PLANET OF THE APES'* Arizona locale (“We set up a little city there.”). 1: Harrison, circa '96, wants out of retirement (“I'm interested in working again.”).



Abetting James Franciscus, Harrison reprised her Nova role in *BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES* (tag line: “The only good human...is a dead human.”).

an ingenue, but—to me—he was a big, strong, nice man who showed me how to handle the ropes.”

The first film's Arizona location “was an awesome place to work. We really set up a little city there. It was amazing. And I think we were all a little bit surprised at how successful the final movie was. It's had a life of

its own for so many years.”

Harrison describes *BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES* as “Fun. I was more experienced by then, and I felt that I had a lot more to do. The director, Ted Post, was a lovely man who was very excited to be directing a sequel to such a big film. And I think the appeal of those movies was

that it got us, as a species, to look at ourselves. The outer space setting was used to get us to examine our own dogma and tradition. So there were several more *APES* films made, plus a TV series.”

And what was Harrison's personal perception of Nova? “My take on her is that she's a gentle spirit. She's vulnerable, but, then again, she's subhuman: she can't read, write, develop or think very much. This made the character a gray area, so there was plenty of room to interpret her. She was instinctive, and the more she hung around with Taylor [Heston's character], the more she began to learn. Her emotions were real and, by the second film, she had evolved. I think that she spent so much time with Taylor on that horse, that she ended up falling in love with him. I liked her. She was different from anybody else in the film. In my eyes, she stood out.”

Shortly after wrapping *BENEATH*, she segued into *BRACKEN'S WORLD*: co-starring with Laraine Stephens, Karen Jensen, and Leslie Nielsen (as Bracken!), Harrison was cast as—well, as an ingenue who's trying to make it in L.A. “It really wasn't much of a stretch,” she admitted. “But it was very different from Nova because I had to learn lines. Midway into the filming of the first episode, the producer came to me and said, ‘Linda, you must learn your lines!’ He was really concerned. But I became very disciplined and ultimately learned a lot. I loved it because it could be so glamorous. It was fun to do, and I could certainly identify with the character!”

Though the series' longevity was trimmed to only a season and a half, Harrison grinned, “It was watched more by the Hollywood community than by the public at large. They liked the inside jokes. We should have made it into a serial like *PEYTON PLACE*, but instead we had an expensive guest star on



BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES: Harrison & James Franciscus (l) find an ally w/ Zira (r), whose assistant cautions the couple, "They will dissect you! And then they will kill you! In that order!" Harrison recalls, "It was fun. Director Ted Post was a lovely man."

every week. So the show died."

Harrison subsequently popped-up as "Winnie" in *AIRPORT* 1975 and frequently surfaced on '70s prime time, with guest appearances on the likes of *BARNABY JONES*. Her final film role to date has been "Susan," which she played in *COCOON* (1985) and reprised, three years later in the sequel, *COCOON: THE RETURN*. "I was actually pregnant during some of the filming of *BRACKEN'S WORLD*," Harrison related, "which pointed toward my future. After 1989, I basically retired to finish raising my sons. They're both in the business now, with their own production company. Now I'm interested in working again."

She's still the recipient of fan mail, most of it about Nova. "There's been a tremendous resurgence of interest in the APES movies," said Harrison. "People have asked me if I'd be interested in being in the proposed remake [which is likely to be directed by James Cameron]. Of course, I would. A few years ago, I went to the FANEX Convention in Baltimore. I'd heard about it before, but when I actually went there I was a little overwhelmed. I was fairly used to people walking up to me in the street and saying, 'You're Nova'—but nothing like this. I've learned a lot about fandom in the last five years or so, and I'm very flattered by all the attention I've been getting. I'm always very

well treated at conventions."

The alluring APES vet is realistic about her career. "I knew that when I was married to Dick [Zanuck], that most of my film roles would come through him in some way. I never got my nose bloodied in L.A. And I knew that when we split up, that roles would be harder to come by. But I've got no regrets. Now that my sons are in the business, the independents are really important. They're looking for the right property, and who knows? It might be science fiction. After all, Dick's first movie as an independent producer was *SSSSSS*, about a man who turned into a snake. Then along came a little movie named *JAWS*. And the rest is history." □

Charlton Heston & Harrison (r), in *PLANET OF THE APES*, encored their roles in the sequel, *BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES* (b): Harrison's "Nova" dies a martyr. "The appeal of those films," says the actress, "was that it got us, as a species, to look at ourselves."

