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KIM HUNTER in **PLANET OF THE APES** ● **LON CHANEY** in **TOD BROWNING's THE UNHOLY THREE** ● **AMOS 'n' ANDY** on Radio & TV ● **MARGARET KERRY-WILLCOX** ● **HARRY BARTELL** on **DRAGNET** ● **"DEKE" HEYWARD** on Live '50s TV ● More



Dr. Zira (Kim Hunter) meets Taylor (Charlton Heston) and Nova (Linda Harrison) in the original Planet of the Apes.

KIM HUNTER

The Beauty Behind the Make-Up for Planet of the Apes

Interview by GREGORY J.M. CATSOS

KIM HUNTER WAS BORN JANET COLE IN DETROIT, MICHIGAN on November 12, 1922. She began her stage career when she was 17, appeared in her first film, *The Seventh Victim* in 1943, then debuted on Broadway as Stella Kowalski in Tennessee Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire* in December, 1947 (for which she won both the Donaldson and Critics' Awards). Hunter repeated this role in the 1951 film version, co-starring Marlon Brando, and won a Best Supporting Actress Oscar for her outstanding performance.

Kim Hunter has also appeared on hundreds of television shows, from the early days of live TV (1948) to the present, including: *Playhouse 90*, *Rawhide*, *Naked City*, *Dr. Kildare*, *Bonanza*, and *Gunsmoke*. She was nominated for Emmy Awards for her performances on *Baretta* and *The*

Edge of Night. Kim has also appeared on *All My Children*, *As the World Turns*, *Murder She Wrote*, *Mad About You*, and *L.A. Law*.

In addition to *Streetcar*, her other films include *A Matter of Life and Death* (a.k.a. *Stairway to Heaven*, 1946), *Deadline U.S.A.* (1952), *Lillith* (1964), and *The Swimmer* (1964). Most *Filmfax* fans, however, remember Hunter for her portrayal of Dr. Zira, the chimpanzee psychiatrist in the first three of the highly successful *Planet of the Apes* quintet. Besides numerous stage performances most recently, Kim Hunter has appeared in the films *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* (1997), *The Hiding Place*, *The Virtuoso*, and *Abilene*. She is also the author of an autobiographical cookbook entitled *Loose in the Kitchen*. Kim Hunter currently resides with her husband, Robert Emmett, a writer, in the West Village in New York City.

FAX: You have become strongly identified with two roles: as Stella in *A Streetcar Named Desire* and as Zira in *Planet of the Apes*.

HUNTER: Right! Some actors are getting constantly stuck with whatever role. People think I'm either pregnant like Stella, or a chimpanzee in *Planet of the Apes*. Years ago, some people would meet me and say, "Stella! Hey Stella," as a joke. At the time, my husband (Robert Emmett) and I were living on Grove Street in New York City. Our bedroom was on the third floor up, but facing the street. Frequently, people would go by and yell, "Stella!" and laugh, and so did we.

I did the first three *Planet of the Apes* films. Roddy McDowall and I played the simian scientists. I got killed in the third one. Roddy, who played Cornelius, did four of them. Roddy missed the second one because he was directing a film in England, at the time. [David Watson played his part.] Roddy was the greatest. I miss that man a lot.

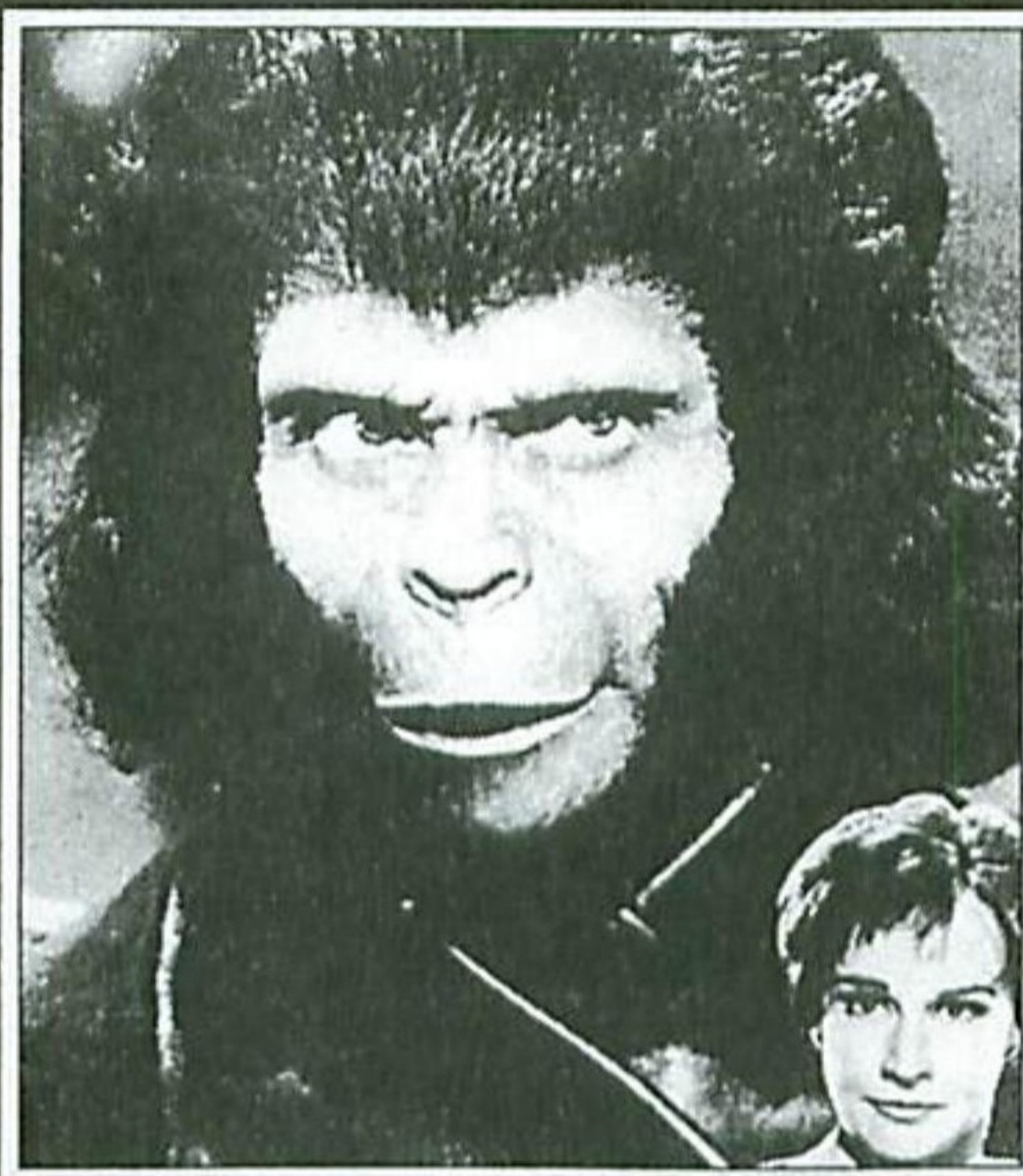
Roddy, like Marlon Brando, had a great sense of humor. They were both very kind and generous human beings, and thoughtful. When I heard that Roddy died, it was so difficult to believe because I had recently seen him at the AMC 30th celebration of *Planet of the Apes* movies, *Behind the Planet of the Apes*, in California. Roddy just seemed fine. Not long after I came back to New York, with my husband, I had heard that he died. It was just shocking.

FAX: How did you get the role of Dr. Zira, a chimpanzee?

HUNTER: My agent sent me a copy of the script for *Planet of the Apes*. He wanted to know if I was interested. I read it and I thought it was a bloody good script and story. I liked what happened in it, and Zira was a fascinating character. Later, I flew to L.A. for the costume tests. I thought I'd be going to the costume department. Instead, I was sent to the make-up department. I couldn't believe what we had to go through to get all of that on. It took about five hours, the first time.

FAX: Charlton Heston once commented, "The whole film depended on the success of that make-up." Also, studio head, Richard Zanuck, was "fascinated" with the concept, but he had worried, "What if the make-up looks funny? What if the audiences laugh at it?" What was your opinion of the apes' make-up?

HUNTER: I thought it was absolutely marvelous. John Chambers did an incredible job. He really did. [Chambers had previously designed make-ups for *The Munsters*, *Lost in Space*, and *Star Trek*.] Chambers had spent eight or nine months working on it to get it to work, and to function. One of the problems was, the "appliances" had to last throughout the day. I do remember when John Chambers was testing the make-up on me, he said, "It's going to be very interesting to see how this turns out. I don't know, but we'll find out eventually



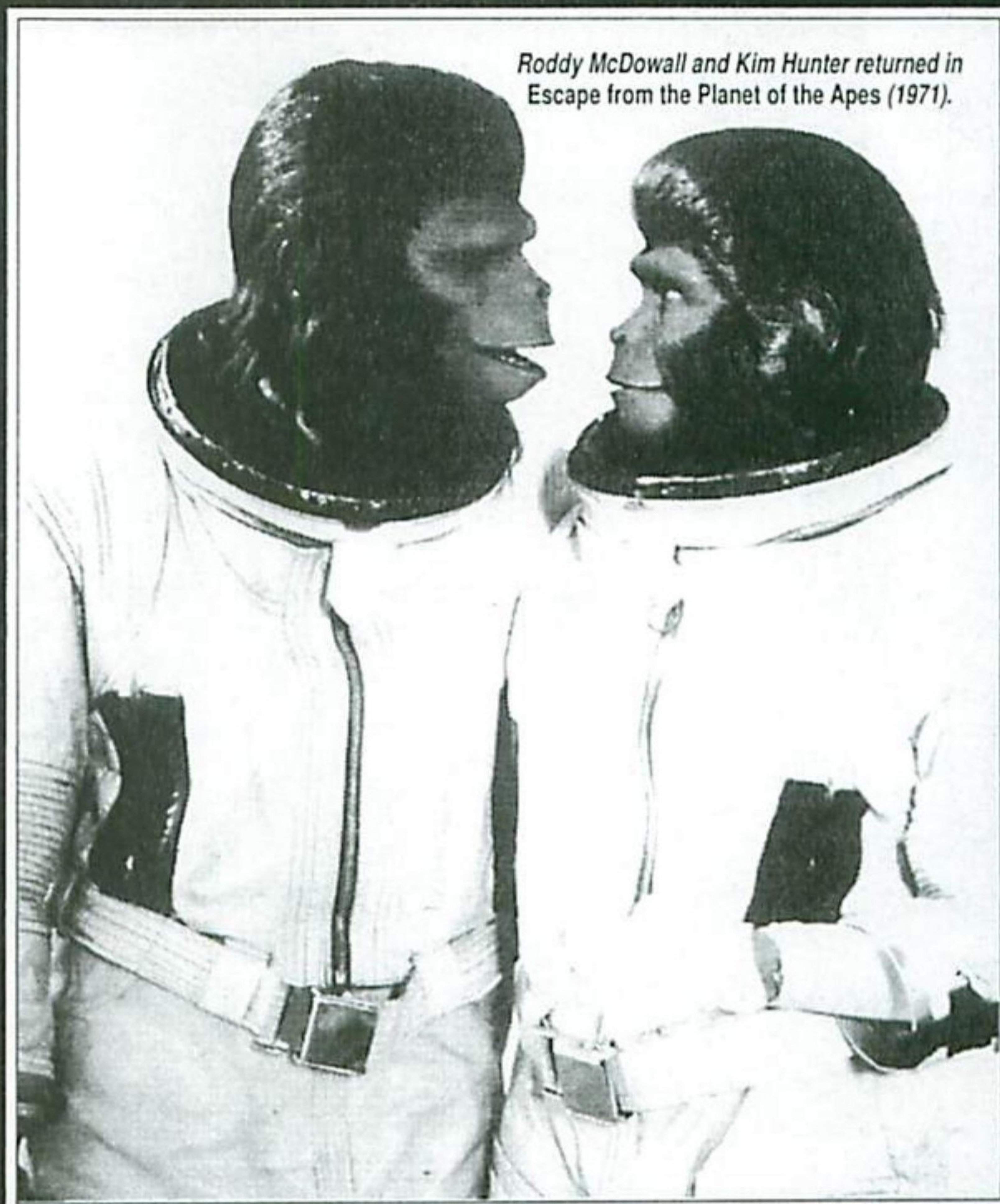
Kim Hunter as Dr. Zira, and without her ape make-up (inset).

whether or not the apes will be believable, or whether it's going to look like Mickey Mouse when people finally see it. We have to wait and see."

FAX: As it turned out, it was believable, and won a special Oscar. But was the make-up difficult for you?

HUNTER: It was difficult. I mean, the amount of time that we spent with our make-up artists was long, about four hours getting into it, and an hour and a half getting out. Finally, we got it down to a little under four hours by the third movie, but not much. It made for very long days, and being in that make-up was highly claustrophobic.

Besides wearing the appliances, we had fur on our hands, and had to wear brown nail polish. The "boots" we had to wear were ape feet; actually, they were hands, not feet. And they were longer than our own feet. Also, the thumb stuck out, which was on the inner side of the foot. With those two big thumbs sticking out, we had to be very careful how we walked all the time so we wouldn't trip on them. It was also very difficult for those apes who had to ride horses. ➔



Roddy McDowall and Kim Hunter returned in *Escape from the Planet of the Apes* (1971).

They couldn't put their whole foot in the stirrups, because if they got the whole foot in, they couldn't get it out in case of an accident. The only thing that was not covered was my eye-balls. That was the only thing you could see of me. Physically, it was not easy for any of us. But the challenge of playing the apes and the chimps was very exciting. I loved the work, itself.

FAX: In character, your eyes were very animated.

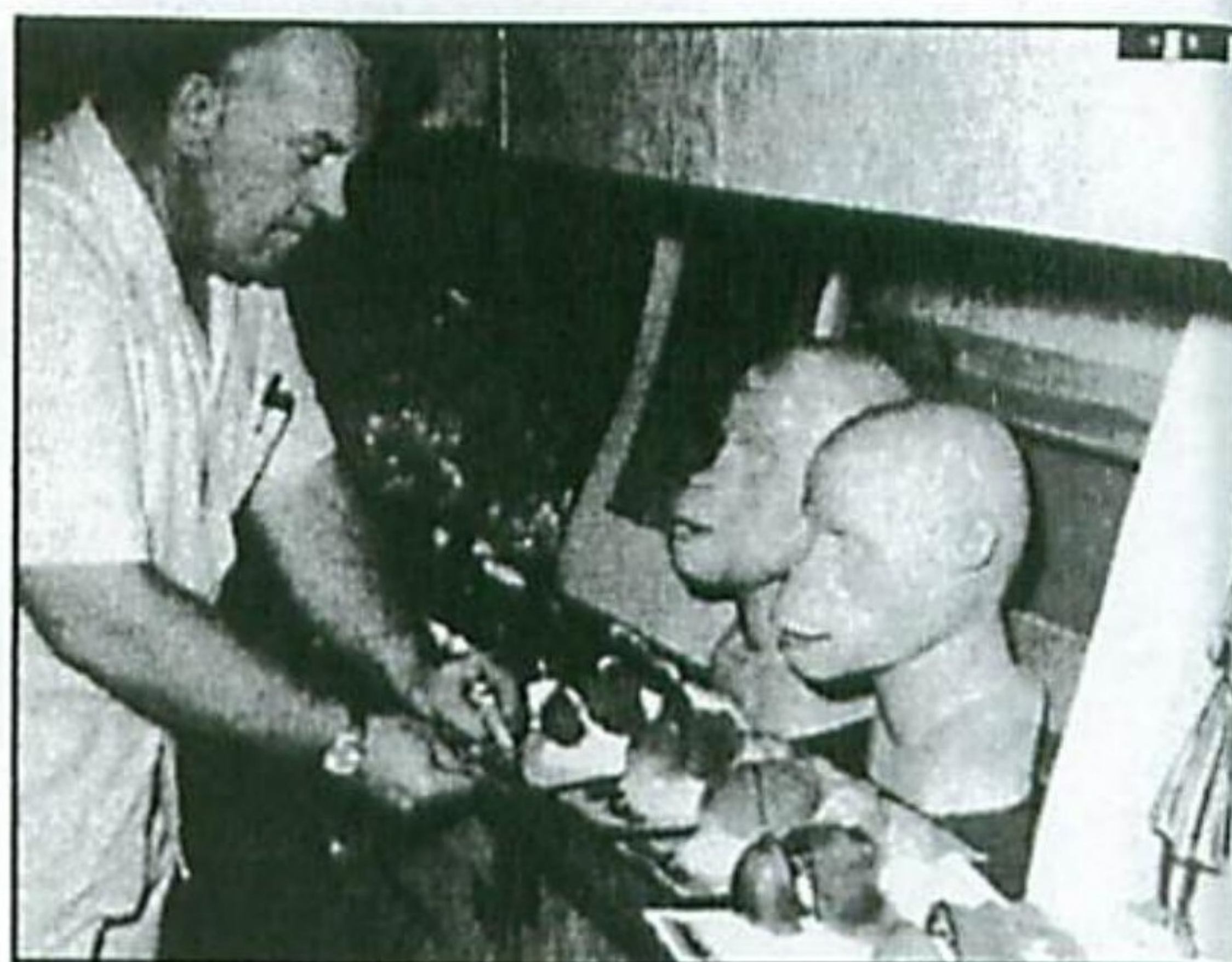
HUNTER: What's going on inside comes out through the eyes. Fortunately, the camera picked up the eyes.

FAX: What was your reaction, the first time you saw yourself in the chimpanzee make-up? Did it bother you?

HUNTER: No, I got used to it. I was facing the mirror



Above and right: master mask-maker John Chambers prepares the ape character foam-latex appliances for the individual actors, and carefully labels them during the construction process.



anyway, when the make-up artist was doing it, and I already saw the stages that it goes through.

FAX: Did it upset you, as an actress, that behind the make-up, people couldn't see your face?

HUNTER: The audience saw the character I was playing. That's all I cared about. And I loved the character of Dr. Zira. John Chambers had developed the make-up, and that took a long time figuring that out. He designed it all. And we had many make-up artists working on the film, including Ben Nye. Every performer had a separate make-up artist. Plus, Chambers needed a bunch of these artists to make new appliances, the make-ups for every day. And one of the problems was that they had to last throughout the day. We could never repeat our appliances. They had to be brand new, every day. Because the alcohol and stuff used to take them off, destroyed them. They were foam rubber, not the plastic they frequently use. I must say, the foam rubber was much easier to deal with. Even though it took forever to get it on and take it off, at the end of the day. I

did use the other kind of make-up, which was terrible, when I was on *The Edge of Night*, when I had to play an old witch. For *Planet of the Apes*, it wasn't exactly a mask, because there were various sections of it. But all of the extras wore masks. Anybody that was not too close to the camera would wear a mask, instead of the appliances. A mask you just put over your head. The appliances needed about four or five different kinds of glue to get them on, particularly around the mouth, to allow the movement.

Sometimes Maurice Evans [Samantha's father on *Bewitched*], who played Dr. Zaius, had a problem. I don't know whether he considered it a problem, but most of the actors around him did. In speaking his lines, a great deal of saliva would come out, frequently. And for the appliances, it drove the make-up artist out of his mind. He had to keep gluing them back on again. When it was hot outside, the crew would kind of relieve him by taking his wig off. Mine never came off. And Maurice didn't have to wear the ears, so he was kind of luckier than we were.

FAX: Was it difficult for you to eat?

HUNTER: Nobody in make-up went to the commissary. Oh, no! Our producer, Arthur Jacobs, brought in make-up tables galore, for us. All our lunches were brought to the set. You had to look in a mirror to eat, to make sure that you didn't destroy the appliance in any respect. I gave up eating a normal lunch, I think, after the second day. It was just too damn difficult. So I had liquid lunches with a straw, which was much easier. I drank my own lunch and then I didn't have to worry about my appliances. All of us had problems at various times.

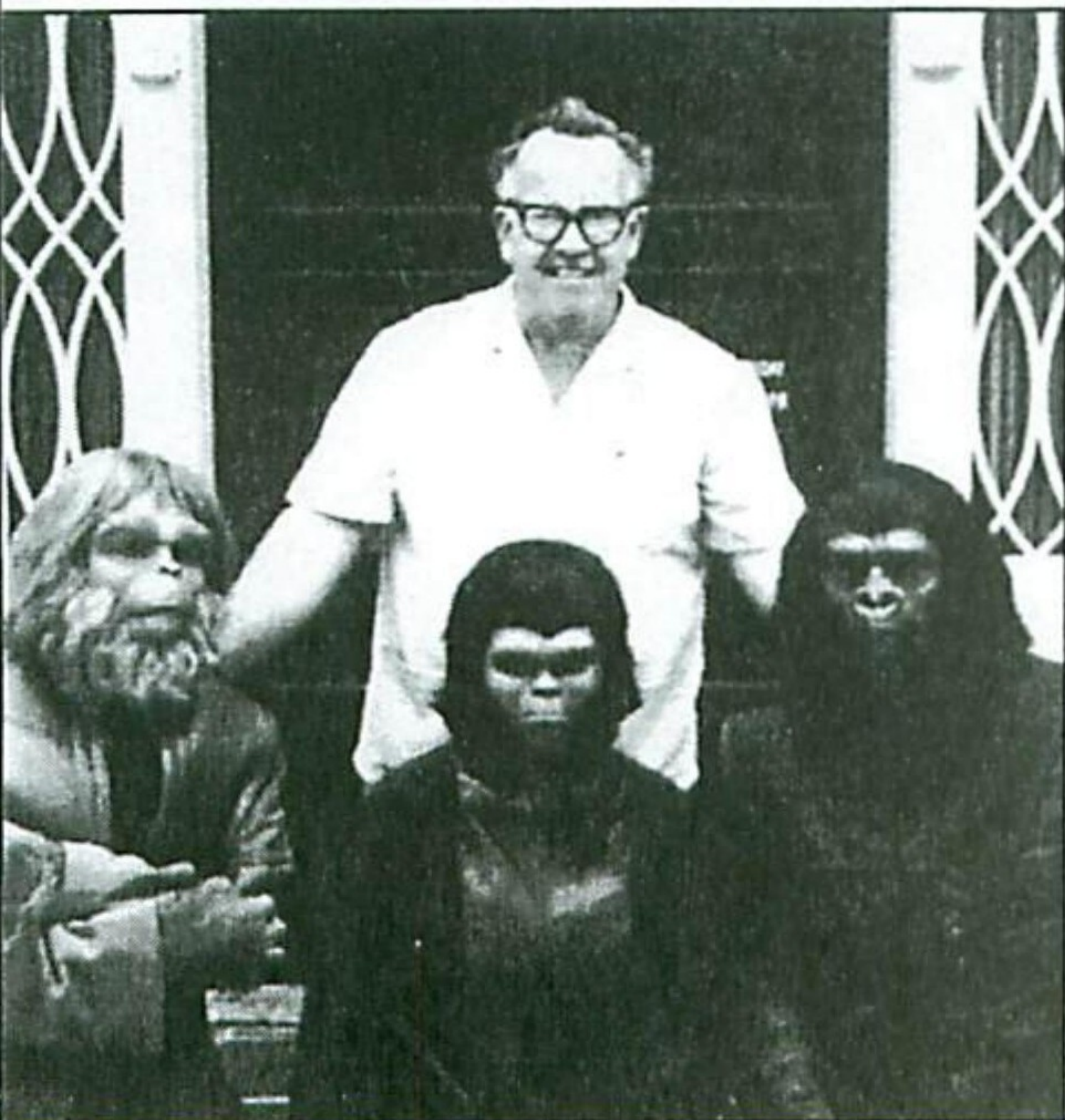
In the third one, *Escape From Planet of the Apes* [1971], in one scene I was trying to drink a cocktail without a straw, which we did normally off-camera, was very difficult. The mouth became unglued. They had to keep gluing my mouth back together again. It was a problem, physically, for the appliances.



Chambers and make-up artist Ben Nye examine the gallery of finished masks prior to shooting.

FAX: Charlton Heston has said that, initially, the primary concern of Richard Zanuck, head of 20th Century-Fox, was that he wanted the ape make-ups to be real and to "work."

HUNTER: Franklin Schaffner, the director, was marvelous in helping us deal with things we couldn't see. He did help in one way after he saw the first run of dailies. The one thing that he gave us, which we wouldn't have known without him, was he came to Roddy and myself and said, "The make-up is marvelous, and it's working, but the problem is, you've got to keep those appliances moving all the time. When you're listening to a person talking, you're not normally moving your face or your mouth. You're listening. But it doesn't work with the appliances. When you're



Above: Chambers poses with three of his character creations based on (left to right): a chimp, and orangutan, and a gorilla. Top: Kim Hunter with and without her Zira costume/make-up.

listening and the camera's on you, then it begins to look like a mask if you're not moving. Keep it moving all the time."

So we started deliberately doing that. We were mushing our faces around all over the place. That was why Roddy and I looked like we had tics, but it worked. He was right. So what the hell. Franklin was wonderful, and paid great attention to what was going on, what was possible and what wasn't possible. He more or less let us do it and teach others how to do it.

When we were doing the first tests, they discovered that Roddy and I tended to sound rather nasal, because of the fact our noses were totally covered by the appliances. They were hidden in the make-up. There was a space between the upper lip and our own lips that led to our nostrils so that we could breathe, because our mouths never totally closed, but it tended to sound vocally nasal. So they sent Roddy and me off to a sound room. We worked—the two of us—reading anything we could lay our hands on, figuring how to do get through the dialog not nasally. We experimented and found out the only way was to send the sound by pushing it to the forward part of the mouth. Gradually we worked it out, how to avoid the nasality. And we also had to teach all the others to talk.

Franklin Schaffner also worked so closely with our cinematographer, Leon Shimmer.

FAX: What do you think was your cutest moment?

HUNTER: Oh, I don't know what my cutest moment was. (laughs) I don't think about things like that. What do you think my cutest moment was?

FAX: When Charlton Heston, as a human, kissed you as a chimpanzee, and you told him that he looked so damned ugly. But audiences believed your convincing performance and felt you were actually a chimp, who could talk. It was a totally different character for you to play, and probably was difficult for you to rely on actor's instinct to do the part.

HUNTER: Sometimes when instinct doesn't work, technique gets involved. It's all very complicated to explain. That's why I never tried to teach acting like many actors have [such as Eli Wallach and Anne Jackson at The Actor's Studio]. I wouldn't have the foggiest idea of how to do it.

We had to convince people that the apes were true characters, true people. When we got involved doing the picture, we never thought of anything else but being true people, I mean true creatures.

FAX: Did you, or Roddy McDowall ever think it was funny to be playing chimpanzees?

HUNTER: No, we took the roles seriously, but sometimes the crew would kid us by bringing us bana-

nas. During the course of the film I got to hate bananas. Finally, I told them, "Come off it."

FAX: Did you go to see the rushes while you were making these films?

HUNTER: I didn't go to "dailies." Normally, I don't go to dailies at all when I'm in a picture. I don't want to be bothered about what I saw in the dailies. I don't like looking at it. What bothered me about seeing them is coming back to work stuck with pictures of what I've done, in my

head, instead of thinking about what is going on in the scene and what I should be doing internally to

make it work. But I did go to the first one. I thought, "For this movie it won't matter, because of the make-up and all of that." Well, I got there, and it did matter. It was no good. I went the first day and never did go again.

FAX: Charlton Heston has said that working with actors made-up as apes and chimpanzees was "very strange, but it became quite routine after awhile." Was it odd for you, seeing the other actors dressed that way?

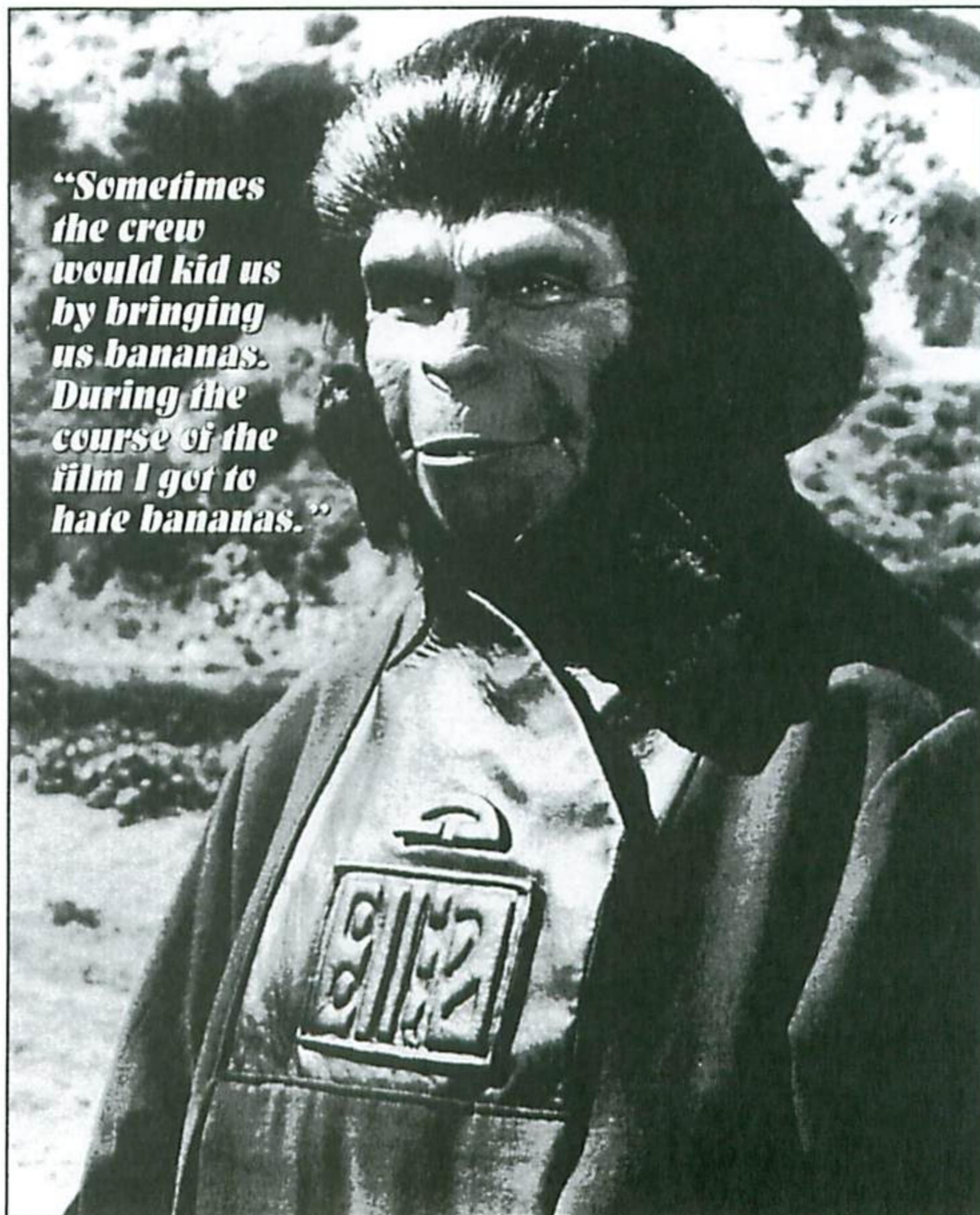
HUNTER: No, because it was the nature of the script. I worked with people who were more or less the same type, same kind of creatures.

FAX: You worked with Charlton Heston in *Planet of the Apes* (1968) and *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* (1970). How was he to work with?

HUNTER: Chuck was fine to work with. He was a professional. I had the sense that he was searching to find exactly what would be the best way to do a scene, but he always started with a sense of truth. And I also tried to do what I felt was needed in the scene. ⇒



Hunter and Zira's infamous inter-species kiss in PotA.



"Sometimes the crew would kid us by bringing us bananas. During the course of the film I got to hate bananas."

In fact, Chuck did one thing that was just marvelous for us "apes." Toward the end of the first one, we were all doing the final scene out at Point Dume, in California, when we were at the cave. Out there it was quite a distance from 20th Century-Fox. We'd get the make-up on, which took four hours. Then, we were driven out there in a limousine, which took a good hour and a half to get out there to Point Dume. It seemed like it took forever. Then, we had to go back in the limo to 20th, to get out of the make-up. The days were just painfully long for us: Roddy McDowall, Maurice Evans, and myself in particular. It was just ridiculous.

Chuck, at the time, was head of S.A.G. [Screen Actors Guild] and he talked Arthur Jacobs [the producer] into supplying us with a helicopter to get us back and forth. It was very sweet of him. Nobody had asked him to do that, but he saw what was happening to us, and he said, "No way should they have to deal with this. It's absolutely insane. Get a helicopter to take them back and forth." Believe me, all of us were grateful to him for that." Oh, God! It was a relief. Bless his heart for that. To get in and out of there faster, was such a joy.

FAX: Charlton Heston said that at the premiere of *Planet of the Apes* you came up to him without your ape make-up and said, "How nice to see you again, Charlton." Do you remember his reaction?

HUNTER: He didn't know who the hell I was, out of make-up. I said, "Chuck, it's me Kim, Kim Hunter," but he didn't recognize me. He had never seen me without the make-up, on the set.

FAX: Edward G. Robinson was originally slated to work in *Planet of the Apes*.

HUNTER: Edward G. Robinson was going to do the picture and play Dr. Zaius, but his doctor had told him,



In the late '60s / early '70s, the anti-war protest movement was in full-swing, even on the Planet of the Apes.

"No way! It wouldn't be good for you." I remember, in the casting, that John Chambers mentioned that Robinson just physically or emotionally couldn't cope with the make-up. Maurice Evans did the part. We didn't have a hell of a lot to do with each other, but he was fine in the part.

FAX: How did you cope with those long make-ups, emotionally?

HUNTER: Well, I'll tell you. After that first long test, I came home to my doctor here, in New York. I said, "I think I'm going to need some help getting through those make-up sessions." And, at that time, my doctor was very much against—most of the time—any kind of "uppers" or "downers." But when I

told him of my make-up experience he said, "Okay, I see what you mean. And so he gave me a prescription for Valium.

I told him, "Whatever that is, it has to relax me during the make-up session, but then I have to be perfectly alert and 'with it' when I'm on the set." Because the make-up was like four hours. The Valium worked just beautifully. I took it as soon as I sat down in the make-up chair. Actually, after the first couple of weeks, I said to my make-up man, Leo Letito, "I don't think I need this anymore. I think I can manage without the pills." But because of the tension involved, that Leo was aware of, he said, "No, you bloody well better take those pills every morning, or you're going to have to get a new make-up artist." (laughs)

FAX: You mean to say that Zira, the chimpanzee scientist, was "stoned" on Valium when she was making *Planet of the Apes*?

HUNTER: No, she was not "stoned" when she was making it. And she wasn't even "stoned" when she

was having the make-up put on, but she was more "relaxed" (laughs) thanks to Valium. And Roddy McDowall brought in a tape recorder, and he played opera and classical music all during our make-up sessions, which helped a lot, too. Frequently, Roddy and I were together in the same make-up area. He played beautiful music, and I'd take my Valium. (laughs)

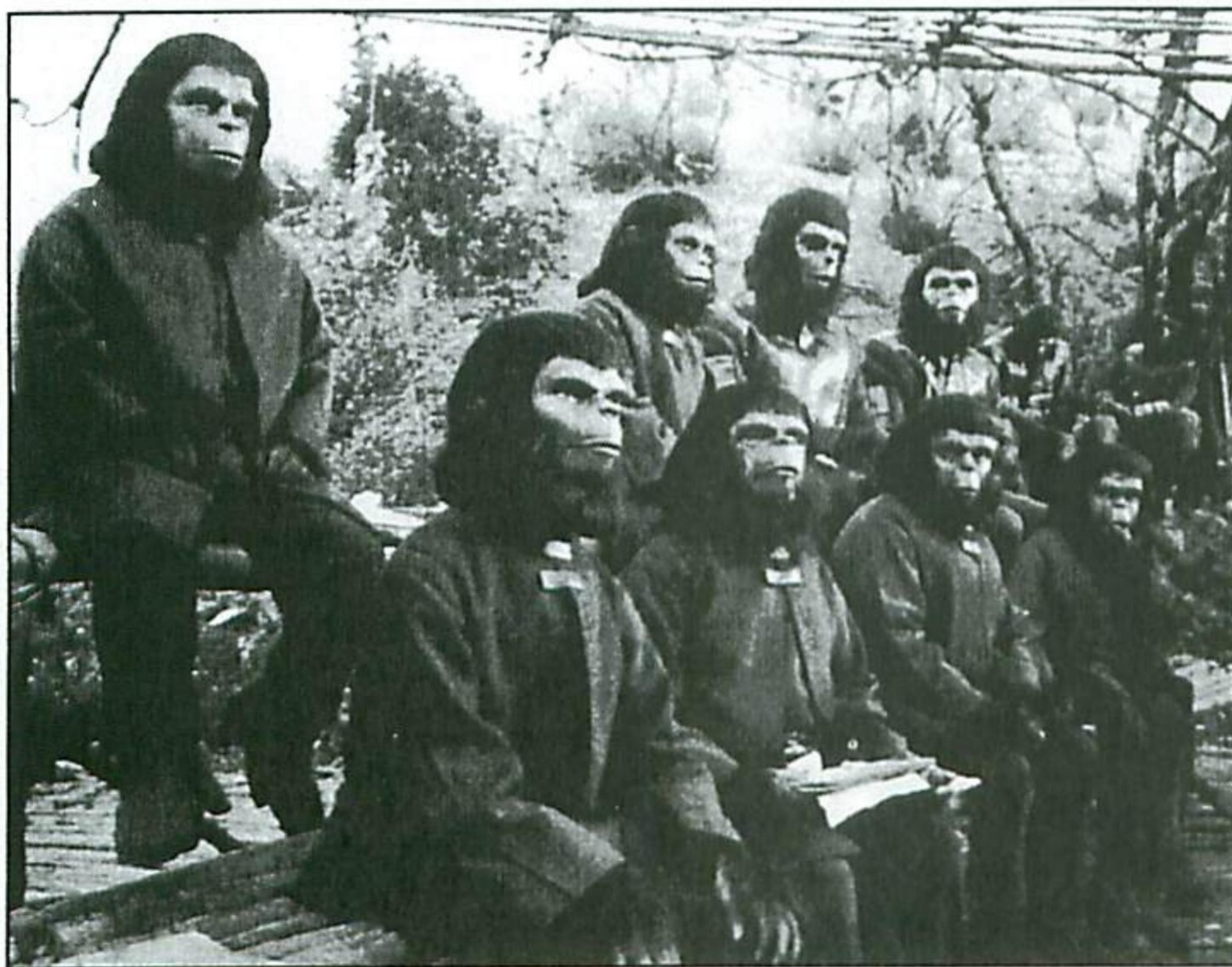
FAX: Stage and film actors Eli Wallach and Ernest Borgnine say that even though the script defines their role, some actors find it necessary to research a role before they play it. What kind of research did you do for the *Apes* pictures?

HUNTER: Roddy and I had done a lot of research—Roddy at the San Diego Zoo, and me at the the Bronx Zoo in New York—to see how the apes moved and how to figure out the present-day ape and chimp. This happened before we even started working on the film.

FAX: You really went out to a zoo?

HUNTER: Of course, where else am I going to find a chimpanzee? Actually, when I was out there, there was one chimp that I always studied, but we didn't have the best of relationships. He got very nervous and unhappy with me watching him all the time. I could see how angry he got. The chimpanzee finally got to the point where he started turning his back on me. But I was able to see how his body functioned, which was a big help in terms of figuring out how to have my character, Dr. Zira, function physically.

I understood exactly what that chimpanzee was going through, later. Because, in the beginning days of the first film, 20th Century-Fox was bringing in a lot of observers, all sorts of big fancy people and executives onto our set, to watch these "apes" that they were shooting. 20th Century-Fox wanted to show off what they were doing. I couldn't believe some of these people. It was like they were in a zoo, except that they could touch us, and they did. I mean, they would kind of poke us in the face. "Oh, is that what the mask feels like?" or "Are those ears yours?" and they'd poke at us. Well, we finally went to the head of the studio and said, "Look! No more visitors; absolutely none, because it's ridiculous to have to live through that treatment."



Scores of actors endured long hours in the hot make-up while filming the Planet of the Apes quintet of films.



Kim Hunter and Roddy McDowall say good-bye to Charlton Heston and Linda Harrison at the end of *Planet of the Apes*.

FAX: Rod Serling, creator of *The Twilight Zone*, co-wrote the original script of *Planet of the Apes* with Michael Wilson. What memories do you have of Serling whom, you already knew?

HUNTER: Rod was a marvelous writer and a darling human being. I was very, very fond of him. We saw each other quite a lot. Also, being involved in his work was sheer joy, for him. I worked with him in television: "The Comedian" and "Requiem For a Heavyweight." I did mention to him, one time, "You seem to have a great tendency to underwrite your women's roles, in your scripts." I called him on it, and he admitted it. I thoroughly enjoyed doing all his work, but I did tell him, "It's all very well, having great women's parts, but it would be better if you could write them as well, too."

Rod said, "Yes, I know. That's why I love having you in my shows. Because I trust that you will fill in all of the things I can't write into the character." He was hoping that emotionally we would just put in what he wasn't able to write. And nine times out of ten, because he wrote so well, it wasn't that difficult.

FAX: In the second installment, *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* (1970), Roddy McDowall was replaced by David Watson, as Cornelius. How was he to work with? Was he different?

HUNTER: Well, of course he was different. I mean, Roddy was Roddy. Nobody else was like him. And the other man, who had replaced Roddy, wore the same mask—the same appliances. As I recall, he was just fine to work with—no problem with him. But we had very little to do in that second one. There was practically no work at all. I was supposed to be out there for only a week. I think it turned out to be two weeks, because of the bad weather, that's all.

FAX: Ted Post directed *Beneath the Planet of the Apes*. What was he like?

HUNTER: As I recall, it was very easy working with him. And for the third one, I was directed by Don Taylor, who was a friend of mine. He was a joy to work with. He not only had ideas about what we should be doing, but also listened to us about what we were doing.

FAX: Linda Harrison played Nova, Charlton Heston's female companion in the first two installments. How was she to work with?

HUNTER: As an actress doing what she did, she was okay, but we just never got to know each other that well. I was paying more attention to Charlton Heston. That was the one who was talking. She didn't talk in the film. She talked a bit in the second one. I also remember she was dating Richard Zanuck at the time.

FAX: What was the most physically difficult *Apes* film you made?

HUNTER: The first was probably the hardest, because it was getting used to the whole thing, and the claustrophobia of the make-up and everything else, which is one reason why I didn't want to do the second one, but I got talked into it. The third one, I loved the script, and so I was delighted to make it. By that time, I knew what I was in for. So it wasn't as difficult, in that sense.

FAX: Which of the three *Apes* movies did you really like doing?

HUNTER: The first and the third one. In the third one, *Escape From Planet of the Apes* [1971], I made my last appearance as Dr. Zira. Roddy McDowall and I reprised our roles as the simian scientists, and we were joined this time by Sal Mineo. This trio had escaped the holocaust that ended the previous film, *Beneath the Planet of the Apes*. Now, we came back to Earth and found ourselves in modern-day Los Angeles, in 1971. I think it was the funniest and gentlest film of the series, and it showed a tender and tragic love story between

Roddy and myself. Of course, in modern-day L.A., these talking "apes" became curiosities and celebrities. The picture was also a perceptive satire on the nature of celebrity.

In one scene, Roddy and I faced a Presidential commission, which was up on a stage. And behind us were the gallery of press people. They had found out that we were two chimps who could talk. Of course, these talking apes had become curiosities and celebrities. John Randolph played the leader of the President's commission. He was questioning Roddy and myself, who were seated. And that day, during work, I kept trying to talk to John, who was an old friend of mine, but I felt this sense of shyness on his part.

Finally, I asked, "Is there some problem, John?"

He said, "You know, Kim, in my mind, I know that underneath all that make-up is 'you.' But emotionally, I can't accept it, because I'm looking at a 'chimp.'"

We both burst out laughing, but it was true. He knew I was under all that make-up, but it was very difficult for him to relate to me, emotionally, to deal with the "look."

At one point in that scene, in order to get rid of all the extras, they shot Roddy and me first. Then, the director, Don Taylor, said to Roddy and myself, "We're not going to be shooting you the rest of the day, so you and Roddy can take those appliances off."

We were to come back, off-camera, to listen to the Presidential commission's questions and to respond to the other actors. So the make-up people started taking the appliances off, and it felt very weird. Roddy had said to me, "Are you feeling the same thing I'm feeling?" He meant it didn't feel like we were Zira and Cornelius. → 86



Taylor pleads with Cornelius and Zira to help free him from his simian captors.

I finally said, "Stop taking all of it off. Leave on some of it. We've got to have it!" The character just didn't work without the appliances. It was very strange.

FAX: You worked with Sal Mineo (Dr. Milo) in the third one, *Escape from Planet of the Apes*. Any special memories about him?

HUNTER: We didn't have a hell of a lot of time together, which was unfortunate, because it was fun working with him. Both Roddy McDowall and I felt sort of protective of him because it was his first go at it, with that type of make-up and film. It was very difficult for him to be confined in the appliances. He wasn't comfortable in playing a chimpanzee. It wasn't easy for him to adjust to, so we tried to help him as much as possible, to be supportive and calm him down. And we had to hug him a lot. (laughs)

FAX: Did you ever have dreams of yourself as being a real-live chimpanzee?

HUNTER: Actually, I remember when we were out at "Point Dume" for *Planet of the Apes*, and I had had some time off. I took a nap, laid down in my trailer, and had a dream that it had happened. That it wasn't just my face. My whole body had become a chimp. And I woke up, half hysterical. Never took another nap after that, I'll tell you; no way!

FAX: In the second one, *Beneath the Planet of the Apes*, you had a baby chimpanzee with you. Was it difficult working with her?

HUNTER: No, she was a darling, absolutely adorable, just wonderful to work with. They had someone in my costume, etc., work with the chimp before I met her. They gave me a cover-up thing under my costume, like cops wear in order to avoid bullets, so if the chimp wanted to bite me on the chest, she couldn't. At one point, the substitute for me, in trying out working with the chimp, did get bitten; not seriously, fortunately. But I never had a problem with the baby chimp. Once in a while, she could be like any little brat, off-screen. The trainer who was taking care of her would deal with it. But, on-screen, once that camera was rolling, the chimp was paying attention to the scene. It was incredible; a natural born actor, truly.

One problem, she was scared to death of elephants. And we had one elephant in the zoo scene. When she saw the elephant for the first time, she nearly squeezed my neck putting her arms around me, hanging onto me, just scared to death, hanging on to me. After that, the director, Don Taylor, made sure the elephant was not where the chimp could see it when she was on-camera.

We did have another problem when I was on the ship, carrying the baby chimp and looking for Cornelius. There are barriers between areas of a ship. I stepped

over that, fine, but on the other side, the crew had left a bunch of lighting wires. I tripped on the wires and fell face down. I held the chimp up because I didn't want her to get hurt. I got bruised, considerably. The chimp didn't get bruised at all, but got scared. The trainer came over immediately, to take the chimp away. I said, "No, no! I'm the one who has to calm her down. I'm the mom, here." So I finally did calm her down.

The next time, they got the wires out of the way so I didn't have a problem. Then, we were doing other running around bits in the interior of the ship. And I was ducking under things, trying to get through. I lost

Cornelius and Zira (Kim Hunter) pose with a baby chimp in this PR shot from *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* (1970).



my balance, at one point, but I caught myself and didn't fall this time. The chimp looked up at me as if to say, "Oh, boy! What have I got here?" It was the funniest look I've ever seen in my life.

FAX: Charlton Heston's character was killed in the second installment, *Beneath the Planet of the Apes*, your character was shot and killed in the third one, *Escape from the Planet of the Apes*. Did you want to die in the third film?

HUNTER: No, I didn't want to die. It was the script writer's idea.

FAX: Were you upset that your character was killed off?

HUNTER: Well, as a matter of fact, it was rather nice that I died, then I knew I didn't have to come back for any more. I really didn't want to come back for the second one. Arthur Jacobs, the producer, had talked

me into it. But I didn't particularly enjoy doing the second film. I had very little to do, and I was glad when it was over. And later, when they were doing the television series, they did call me up, at one point, and wanted to know if I'd join them for the series. I said, "No, thank you." I didn't want to go through all that make-up, again.

FAX: At the time you were making *The Planet of the Apes*, did you think that it would become a legendary cult film someday?

HUNTER: Oh, not legendary. I wouldn't have thought that. "Legendary" is asking for more than one can possibly ask for. I just hoped to hell it would work, that people would understand it, and like it.

FAX: Were you surprised the film spawned four sequels and a TV series?

HUNTER: No, I wasn't surprised when the first one was a big success, that they were thinking about doing more. I was wondering what they were going to do in the sequels, but they found ways.

FAX: Are you surprised that, 30 years later, these *Apes* movies have achieved cult status?

HUNTER: No, not a bit surprised. They were very good films and were exciting for young people, as well as adults. We all didn't know, until we saw the first one, how it was going to be reacted to. Once we got that positive reaction, we relaxed. I was delighted that people enjoyed the film so much. The film shocked many people at the time.

The fan mail I get—most of my fan mail—is related to *The Planet of the Apes*. This mail is from all over the world, not from just this country, and it's basically on *Apes*. I've known, through the letters I get, that they express great admiration and fondness for the films. To this day, I still get nothing but positive reactions to the films. So no, it's no surprise for me, at all, that it caught on. And a lot of people were just delighted that AMC did what was wanted and had the festival of the movies, plus

the documentary *Behind the Planet of the Apes*.

I think the theme is just as valid today as it was then, and it will also be, years from now. It's about the problem that creatures have with creatures who are not like you. Everybody seems afraid around those creatures that are different from us. It's what the film's about. Wars happen, God knows, because of that. And it was a reverse kind of satirical comment on the problem, by having the apes not happy with the human beings, as opposed to human beings not being happy with the apes, but it made its point. I think it's something that people can relate to throughout history. It's not going to stop. Ω

For more information on the *Planet of the Apes* films, see Charlton Heston interview in *Filmfax* #24 and Linda Harrison interview in *Filmfax* #74.