

FILMS

in Review



COMPLETE CAREER
OF ANITA STEWART

THE MOVIES OF
ROBERT PRESTON

THE NOISE THAT
PASSES FOR MUSIC

THE PAST OF
FILMS IN REVIEW

GERD OSWALD'S
TV DIRECTION

March 1968
75¢

FILM REVIEWS

PLANET OF THE APES

A good case can be made for the contention that the most interesting fiction now being written is the better grade of science fiction — the kind which, in addition to manipulating gimmicks derived from the natural and physical sciences, utilizes imaginative ideas about men and societies of the future.

Pierre Boule's novel, *La Planete des Singes*, was an excellent example of such high-grade sci-fi. Space missiles and other gimmickry occupied only its opening pages, and the remainder of that intelligent novel was a telling satirization of totalitarianism. It was based on a premise worthy of Swift: the assumption that apes had evolved from men; that their society was menaced by human ignorance and rapacity; that the survival of simian civilization required the sequestration, if not the extinction, of the forever inferior human race.

Such a premise provided a misanthropic mind like Boule's with congenial opportunities for deriding human institutions by having apes uphold their worst aspects (the wholly authoritarian ape society paranoically represses the slightest manifestation of dissent). Boule had a fine time concocting analogies that were expressions of his

disenchantment with man and all his works.

The film Arthur Jacobs has produced from Boule's novel also satirizes the human condition. Not, it is true, with *all* of the Boule-ian by-play. But with enough for *Planet of the Apes* to be, intellectually, the most interesting film released so far this year.

It opens with an ailing US spacecraft falling into a lake on an unidentified planet and three of its four astronauts swimming to the shore of a wasteland (the fourth, a woman, is already dead). They had left Earth 2000 years before, but, by virtue of some cryogenic or other vaguely connoted process aboard the spacecraft, their bodies had aged only by 18 months.

The three survivors struggle across lifeless desert until they encounter vegetation — and a horde of filthy, barbaric humans who cannot speak. They have no sooner arrived among these dubious creatures than all are set upon by black-leather jacketed gorillas riding horses and brandishing rifles, whips and nets. One of the astronauts is killed; the other two, along with the barbaric humans, are rounded up. One astronaut is lobotomized by doctors who are chimpanzees and orangutans. The other, the leader of the astronautic

expedition, is brought before the head of the simian state and sentenced to emasculation and surgery that will expropriate his memory.

Sprinkled throughout the melodrama that leads to his ultimate escape is most of the film's verbal satire. E.g., "The Almighty created the ape in His image;" "Only humans kill for sport, lust or greed;" "Human see, human do." There is also much on-screen satire — the humans are in cages, the apes speak but the humans can't, etc.

The astronaut's escape is made possible by chimpanzee scientists who feel the ape-autocracy has a pro-orangutan

bias. In the fade-out, which is preceded by a twist I shall not reveal, the astronaut and one of the female human-mutes ride away from the simian civilization to find, let us hope, a Garden of Eden.

All this is put before us with cinematic art. Leon Shamroy's color-photography has never been better, nor his camera-angles chosen more imaginatively. His landscapes of the country round-&-about Lake Powell and the Colorado River in Utah and Arizona actually suggest an unearthly terrain. The art direction of Jack Martin Smith and William Creber, and the set dec-

The humans were caged & the orangutans were biased against chimpanzees



orations of Walter M. Scott and Norman Rockett, suggest a settlement that actually looks like something apes might evolve. And the simian-face make-up created by John Chambers, and executed by Ben Nye and Dan Strieke, is a cinematic achievement of the highest order. The costumes for the apes designed by Morton Haack are both imaginative and credible, and so is much of the music of Jerry Goldsmith (credible in the sense of being appropriate to the visuals and their mood).

The leading astronaut is played by Charlton Heston, who once again proves he is not only statuesque but discerning as an actor. Maurice Evans, Kim Hunter and Roddy McDowall and others assumed the mannerisms of intelligent apes, as well as the marvelous facial masks of Mr. Chambers. Linda Harrison, as the mute human Mr. Heston chose for his Eve, projects a not inconsiderable range of emotions without ever speaking a word.

The direction of Franklin J. Schaffner seems to me unsure, especially in the beginning, when he had Heston be antagonistic toward one of the other astronauts. But perhaps this was due to the script by Michael Wilson and Rod Serling, which is full of the political angling one expects from Wilson, and, to a less extent, from Serling.

For example, when one of the astronauts erects a little American flag in the wasteland they have landed on, the script obliges Heston to laugh derisively.

HENRY HART

HALF A SIXPENCE

H. G. Wells subtitled his novel *Kipps*, to which this filmusical is vaguely related, "The Story of a Simple Soul." As adapted for the screen by Dorothy Kingsley and Beverley Cross, from an inoffensive stage musical, *Kipps* has become more simple-minded than simple.

Much of the failure of this expensive but tastelessly mounted musical "extravaganza" is due to director George Sidney, whose previous filmusicals also lacked the sparkle which is so vital a part of the genre (*Annie Get Your Gun*, *Showboat*, *Kiss Me Kate*, *Pal Joey*, and, to a lesser degree, *Bye, Bye Birdie*). Sidney's direction here is always commonplace and occasionally disjointed. The dance numbers, choreographed by Gillian Lynne, are the worst since Peter Gennaro's for *The Unsinkable Molly Brown*, and the

Steele was literally everywhere



FILMS

in Review



**TEX RITTER'S
FILM CAREER**

**THE FILMS OF
JUDITH ANDERSON**

**MARCEL PAGNOL
& HIS PARADOX**

**LAST SCORE OF
ALFRED NEWMAN**

**A NEW INDEX TO
LON CHANEY FILMS**

**April 1970
90¢**

Enhancing his reputation among today's anarcho-nihilists? Yes. Anything else?

My guess: regurgitating a personal, life-long anti-humanism.

HENRY HART

BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES

It's usually true that sequels aren't so good as the success they follow and *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* is no exception. But don't write it off as a dud. Had there never been a *Planet of the Apes* (FIR reviewed it March '68) the present picture would probably seem a better than average sci-fier. If only because it's a well-stocked show-case of the kinds of propaganda now emanating from Hollywood.

The story-line of this sequel, however, won't withstand analysis. A second spaceship, sent to rescue the first, suffers a similar disaster and lands, 2000 years from now, back on an atom-bomb destroyed Earth. Its sole survivor encounters the girl Nova; they are captured by the apes but escape; are then captured by mutated humans who live underground in what was once NYC's subway, and who worship an operational atom-bomb, which, to defend themselves against invading gorillas, they explode.

All this is accompanied by dialogue and statements parodying Christian liturgy — some of which will offend many Christians — and parodies of other aspects of human society in the twentieth century.



James Gregory's voice sounded right

The acting in this film can scarcely be called such. Charlton Heston has only a few scenes as the survivor of the first spaceship (Taylor), and played them only dutifully; Linda Harrison again personifies Nova, but this time is merely a breast exposure; and James Franciscus, as the rescue-mission astronaut, is the kind of incompetent actor it is enervating to watch. Kim Hunter and Maurice Evans, in their wonderful organ-gut masks, go practically unused.

WILSON WALTERS

WOMEN IN LOVE

D. H. Lawrence wrote *Women in Love*, which he often said was his best novel, in 1913 and rewrote it in '17, and it was published in '20. It is practically unreadable today, save as

FILMS

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**40 YEARS OF
SONG LYRICS**

**THE STORY OF
RUBY KEELER**

**JOHN MILLS'
CAREER TO DATE**

**MOVIE QUIZ
FOR EGGHEADS**

**REVIEW OF THE
'70-1 TELEFILMS**

**Aug.-Sept. 1971
90¢**

thoughts went to the Manson crimes in California; the witchcraft in Vineland NJ; the moor murders in England; and the title of one of Goya's capriccios — "When reason sleeps, monsters flourish" — began beating in my brain. I even understood why Russell sprinkled throughout his film gags that mocked what he was doing (relief from the real-life horror). For example, when he has Louis XIII shoot a Huguenot rigged out in a bird costume, Russell has that monarch, whom he has depicted as an androgyne, say superciliously: "Bye bye, blackbird."

Oliver Reed's performance as Father Grandier is very poor, but so, I suspect, was the writing of the part, and Vanessa Redgrave as Sister Jeanne is ridiculous (probably for the same reason). There is a very good performance by Michael Gothard as a mad fanatic (Father Barre). The art direction of Robert Cartwright is fascinating, and so is the music of Peter Maxwell Davis.

HENRY HART

ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE APES

Incomparably better than *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* ('70), and almost as good as *The Planet of the Apes* ('68), this third film in an unintended series, which has resulted from genuine popularity, continues to exploit the masochistic notion that mankind may not always be Earth's master race.

At the end of *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* the years was 3955 and

Earth was incinerated in a chain of nuclear explosions. But just before that Domsday, according to the present film, three intelligent and articulate chimpanzees — Cornelius, Zira and a new character named Milo — located the crashed US spacecraft which had brought humans to the apes' city and in it they "negotiate a bend in time" and get back to the year 1973 (they crash-land in the Pacific off Los Angeles). At first welcomed as astonishing curiosities — apes that can talk — they become objects of fear when it is discovered Zira is pregnant and it is realized articulate chimpanzees breeding with dumb ones can produce articulate young (remember the premise of the first film: humans are dumb and articulate apes dominate Earth). The last portion of this film consists of chases, hunt-downs, and a switch-ending. The last not only truckles to the current anti-man masochism of the young but makes a fourth film in this series possible.

Paul Dehn wrote the script for *Escape from the Planet of the Apes* and except for the fact that talking chimps are in it, and there are allusions to a "future" in which apes rule the Earth, it has little to do with the Pierre Boulle novel. But it is just as full of political, and other kinds, of satire. Dehn's script was well directed by Don Taylor, and the chimp make-up created by John Chambers, Ben Nye and Dan Stricke is still effective. Kim Hunter again plays Zira and Roddy McDowell again plays Cornelius. The

new character of Milo (Sal Mineo) is killed off early.

It's worth seeing. B. F. LEEDOM

PETER RABBIT AND THE TALES OF BEATRIX POTTER

Only the cinema, of all the arts, can effectively provide a delight as esthetically complex as this.

Here the dancers of Britain's Royal Ballet, clad in costumes which give them the semblance of the animals in the illustrations of Miss Potter's unforgettable books, and wearing masks which resemble the faces of those animals, perform in an imaginatively choreographed scenario a blend of some of the lovably anthropomorphic Potter stories. Everyone connected with this unusual and permanently valuable motion picture seems to have been inspired: Richard Goodwin and Christine Edzard who adapted the Potter stories (Mr. Goodwin was also the producer and Miss Edzard also designed the sets and costumes); Frederick Ashton who evolved the choreography and Rostislav Doboujinsky who designed the masks; John Lanchbery who wrote the music and conducted the orchestra of the Royal Opera House Covent Garden); Austin Dempster who color-photographed; and Reginald Mills, who directed it all.

The dancing and miming are so exquisite it is difficult to single out the most remarkable. I was especially enchanted by Frederick Ashton's Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle (a hedge-hog); Michael Coleman's Jeremy Fisher



In the film this was in scale

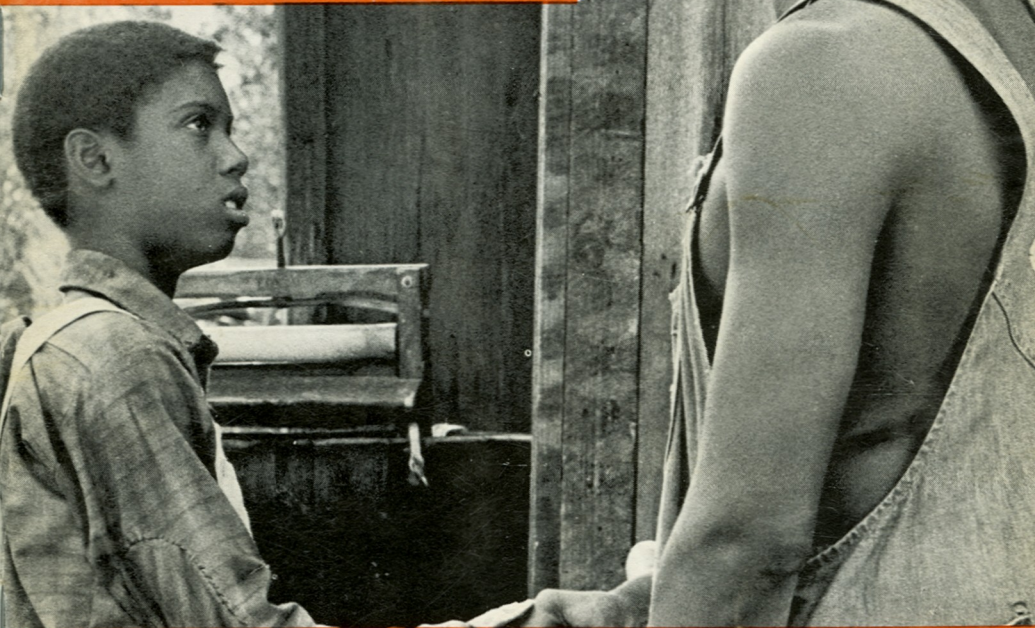
(a frog); Ann Howard's Jemima Puddle-Duck, who almost gets cooked, with sage and onions, by Robert Mead's Fox; Brenda Last's Black Berkshire Pig; Keith Martin's elegant Johnny Town-Mouse; and Julie Wood's Mrs. Tittlemouse. And the brief glimpse of Beatrix Potter drawing and writing her stories, portrayed by Erin Geraghty, is in perfect taste.

TATIANA BALKOFF DROWNE

THE HELLSTROM CHRONICLE

The Hellstrom Chronicle is an outstanding example of how astute buckchasers can assemble miscellaneous documentary footage, unify it via an overall idea that coincides with current delusions of "in" people, and market the result profitably.

fxc
FILMS
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**DAVE O'BRIEN'S
CAREER**

**PORTRAYING
PRESIDENTS**

**LANA TURNER'S
CAREER**

**BENNY GOODMAN
AND FILMS**

**SCORE FOR
POPE JOAN**

**OCTOBER 1972
90¢**

FILM REVIEWS

SOUNDER

With so much emphasis in films today about the seamy side of the life of Blacks, to see a film portraying the heroism of a Black family living in poverty in the South during the Depression may indicate we are coming to the end of the cycle of violence, drugs and criminality. The stress on the humanity of the characters in *Sounder* is all important — suffering makes all of us brothers and the detailing of a Black boy's struggle for learning and a better life (while he and his hardworking, albeit ignorant family, are clothed in dignity) will do more to wipe out racial prejudice than any movie or tv show recently seen. This picture makes a personal statement about the human condition in terms of ethnic and racial minorities which rises above all the shouting and shooting of our day.

Based on the Newbery Medal Winner, *Sounder* was adapted for the screen by Lonnie Elder III, author of *Ceremonies in Dark Old Men*, and though he has greatly changed the story outline, he has kept the spirit of the book, in which "people who are Black are identifiable as Everyman." The film title is the name of a coon hound whose fate limns that of the Morgan family (Paul Winfield,

Cicely Tyson and Kevin Hooks).

Producer Robert Radnitz, director Martin Ritt, composer Taj Mahal and all concerned are to be thanked for giving us a beautiful film; more than that, they have created a movie classic.

TATIANA BALKOFF DROWNE

CONQUEST OF THE PLANET OF THE APES

This is the fourth *Planet of the Apes* picture. All the previous ones have been violent action pictures but they have had a generous interlarding of humor, sometimes rising to wit, as the apes often proved more rational than men. In *Conquest Of The Planet Of The Apes* this ingredient barely exists. The emphasis is on mayhem, murder and the collapse of any understanding between the species.

The picture begins circa 1990. Due to an unexplained epidemic all the world's cats and dogs have been wiped out. The apes have proved so intelligent, so responsive to instruction they are now being used as household servants and as a work force handling the most menial and least desirable jobs. The civilization has become a virtual police state. Into this milieu comes Armando, a

circus owner. One of the stars of his circus is a chimp named Caesar. Caesar and Armando know he is the child of the generation of apes who could talk and reason, so feared by humans they exterminated them. They'd erase Caesar too if they knew about him. When Caesar sees how brutally the apes are treated, how they are in effect slaves in his society, he is outraged. On one occasion seeing an ape viciously and relentlessly beaten he curses the police in their own tongue. Armando tries to cover up but is tortured into admitting Caesar is the descendant of the apes who had once ruled the planet.

The rest of the film is devoted to the police hunt for Caesar, Caesar's rallying of the apes to revolt and their final victory. Caesar's closing harangue tries to make some connection between the picture's theme and the dilemma of minorities today but the comparisons are tenuous and clumsy.

Roddy McDowell plays Caesar with all the skill, imagination and range he has displayed throughout the series. John Chambers, who created the original ape make-up, repeats his earlier triumphs. J. Lee Thompson has directed this conglomeration of bizarre elements with flair and style.

The Conquest Of The Planet Of The Apes has lost the pixiness, the sly social comment, that was part of its unique appeal. It's blood and thunder all the way now.

HUBBELL ROBINSON

THE PUBLIC EYE

Carol Reed and Universal Pictures had in Peter Shaffer's screenplay the ingredients for a soufflé of light comedy but something went wrong resulting in a flat pancake of Mia Farrow's elfin qualities, Topol's over-acting and Michael Jayston's dull, British aplomb. The heroine of the picture is the city of London, photographed excitingly by Christopher Challis.

MEG MATTHEWS

THE HAPPINESS CAGE

When a society is morally disintegrating, one of the questions certain to arise is the extent to which that society "can legitimately go to control the anti-social activities of its citizens." It is this problem with which *The Happiness Cage* deals, and though the cards are stacked against the US military portrayed by Ralph Meeker, who is in charge of a hospital in Germany experimenting on "difficult" soldiers, the film is extraordinary because of the performances of Christopher Walken and Ronny Cox. Bernard Girard directed and Ron Whyte did the screenplay adaptation from Dennis Reardon's play.

DOROTHY SOMERS

SHAFT'S BIG SCORE

When the first *Shaft* picture arrived last summer there were indications its creators were inventing a character who would have some wry, perceptive, revealing comment to make about the brutal black-white criminal world he lived in and on.

In *Shaft's Big Score* that's all gone.

AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 1973

\$1.00

FILMS *in Review*

**"BILLY" BITZER'S BOOK
ROUBEN MAMOULIAN**

**BETTY GRABLE'S CAREER
COLE PORTER & TV**



passport forger. Delphine Seyrig has a short part as one of the Jackal's love interests. The Technicolor shots of France, Italy and Austria lend richness as well as authenticity.

C. P. R.

BATTLE FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES

Roddy McDowall once more stars as Caesar in this fifth and supposedly last of the "Ape" films. Unfortunately this is the least successful of the series. The apes find their own kind (gorillas) can be as evil as men. Lew Ayres plays a pacifist simian and John Huston cameos as "The Lawgiver." The film was produced by Arthur P. Jacobs and directed by J. Lee Thompson from a screenplay written by John William Corrington and his wife, Joyce Hooper Corrington.

DEIRDRE MACK

THE FRIENDS OF EDDIE COYLE

Scripter Paul Monash has transferred George V. Higgins' novel to the screen so as to emphasize the obscene words and the sleaziness of the characters rather than the economy and at times, wit of Higgins' writing. Director Peter Yates has a good cast, headed by Robert Mitchum (Eddie Coyle) and Peter Boyle (Dillon). (They both try too hard at their Boston accents.) Mitchum is very convincing as a cheap criminal who gets caught in a double cross with the police who have their own rules of morality not always con-

sistent with the law, and his criminal "friends." Boyle is adept at saving his own neck even if murder is necessary. Yates has used the Boston locale well.

HUGH JAMES

THE OFFENCE

The Offence is a gripping psychological drama, a film of surprises. The plot ostensibly concerns a search in the suburbs of London for a child molester, but the film really uncovers the personality problems of the investigator (Sean Connery) assigned to the case, who has hidden his own problems in his search for criminals.

Connery's handling of the character's complexity is excellent. He is called upon to be sensitive and yet hard. He must kill as a catharsis to the horrors he has witnessed. He projects all his perverted feeling onto a supposed child molester; in killing him, the investigator is killing himself.

Connery is ably assisted by Vivien Merchant, who gives a superb performance as his wife who can neither reach him, nor help him.

Gary Fisher's camerawork adds to the precise examination of the character. His camera also captures the gloom of the London suburbs in rain.

The direction of Sidney Lumet is very taut, and only falters when Trevor Howard, as his superior questions Connery about his actions. The film at this point becomes repetitive. This is only a minor flaw in a powerfully acted, well-written (by John Hopkins) and superbly photographed film.

WILLIAM AVERY