Monkey business

After years of attending parties for people who acted like monkeys, I went to one for a monkey who acted like people.

His name is Baby Milo and the swank soiree in the Grand Trianon of the Beverly Wilshire followed the preview of “Escape From the Planet of the Apes” at 20th Century-Fox. Milo wasn’t happy about the flashbulbs exploding, but at least he didn’t act like that long ago star who went ape, King Kong.

Producer Arthur Jacobs was host, and, in addition to Milo, other cast members greeting guests were Jacob’s wife, Natalie Trundy, Ricardo Montalban, Eric Braeden, Bradford Dillman, and the film’s director, Don Taylor.

Suzy Parker and husband Brad Dillman came for the evening from their home in Santa Barbara. They try to avoid the party circuit. As Suzy explained, “Even in my heyday I didn’t smoke, drink, go to nightclubs, or even dance.” Nor would she go to men’s apartments (If I was going to have a war, I wanted it fought on my grounds”). Referring to her days as the world’s most famous model, Suzy says, “I was an animated clothes hanger.” She must have been the highest paid clothes hanger in history.
"Escape from the Planet of the Apes" is the third in what is becoming a series of films (two's a sequel, three's a series) stemming from the highly original and hugely profitable "Planet of the Apes," which producer Arthur P. Jacobs made for 20th Century-Fox four years ago.

The first film, based on Pierre Boule's novel, "Planet of the Apes," took place in the distant future after human civilization as we know it had long been destroyed. The second, "Beneath the Planet of the Apes," continued chronologically, but in the third, Paul Dehn's original screenplay moves the period all the way back to the present day.

The simian scientists narrowly escaped the conflagrations that consumed the earth in the second film and now they travel, through a bend in time and in a handy spaceship, backward across the centuries to contemporary Los Angeles.

In "Escape from the Planet of the Apes," Kim Hunter, the only star to appear in all three films, is reunited with Roddy McDowall, who played her simian husband in the first one. Both stars, in their ape makeup, get to wear fashionable modern clothes for the first time.

For the new film, producer Jacobs has added a new ape character who, in a switch in casting, is played by filmdom's longtime favorite juvenile delinquent, Sal Mineo. These three are the only ape characters in the story. Actually, there is a fourth but he is a contemporary, non-intelligent ape in a zoo who tries in his confused way to befriend the brilliant visitors. He is played by Janos Prohaska who specializes in portraying apes on the screen.

Among the contemporary human characters are Bradford Dillman who plays an animal psychiatrist. "I'm the first to discover that they can actually think and talk," Dillman says. "From there on, I seek to protect them against authorities who would have them destroyed because they are strange." Dillman says he has never known an animal psychiatrist but they must certainly exist in Beverly Hills.

Natalie Trundy, who in private life is Mrs. Arthur P. Jacobs, plays another animal psychiatrist. Miss Trundy was a well-known Broadway actress before a broken back interrupted her career some years back.

Eric Braeden, who played a brilliant scientist in the recent, "Colossus, the Forbin Project," plays another scientist here and William Windom, who played a congressman on television for several years, goes all the way up to President of the United States in this film.

Ricardo Montalban plays the owner of a circus and Albert Salmi is seen as the government interrogator of the articulate simians.

"Escape from the Planet of the Apes" was directed by Don Taylor, a leading actor before he turned to directing. "Escape" is his fifth feature film, although he has dozens of television shows, to his credit.

"Escape from the Planet of the Apes" was filmed entirely in Los Angeles and environs. In this part of the world, actors before cameras on the street don't cause much commotion anymore, but when the actors are apes and the apes are checking into the Beverly Wilshire Hotel or shopping for clothes at Giorgio's Dress Shop and Dick Carroll's Men's Shop, even blase natives are likely to gape. Gape they did, causing numerous traffic jams.

The splashdown of the spacecraft was shot off the Malibu coast north of Los Angeles. Other locations included the Los Angeles Zoo and the County Museum of Natural History. Ricardo Montalban's circus was set up on a golf course across the street from 20th Century-Fox.

Besides Jacobs, McDowall and Miss Hunter, other major veterans of the original "Planet of the Apes" on hand for the third film are art director William Creber and makeup genius John Chambers.

Creber's job was simpler this time around.

For the first film, he had to dream up the vast Ape City. For the second, he had to create a mutated New York City entirely underground. For the current film, he merely had to cope with present-day Los Angeles.

Makeup man Chambers' job was easier too, simply because he had only three simians to deal with.

One new problem involved making a baby chimpanzee resemble Kim Hunter and Roddy McDowall who are supposed to be its parents. Chambers, who worked with 20th Century-Fox makeup chief Dan Striepeke on the new film, won an Oscar for his original ape makeup for "Planet of the Apes," one of only two Oscars ever given to makeup men in the Academy's 43-year history.

Associate producer Frank Capra, Jr., the son of the distinguished filmmaker, has had 16 years of experience in TV writer, film editor, director and producer. He recently served as associate producer of "Marooned."

Cinematographer Joseph Biroc's previous credits include "Bye Bye Birdie," "Hush, Hush ... Sweet Charlotte" and "The Flight of the Phoenix."