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The 50 Greatest Sci-fi Icons



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25

CORNELIUS

The historian, archaeologist – and chimpanzee – Cornelius is central to the first *The Planet Of The Apes* novel, as well as the earlier film adaptations



SOCIAL IMPACT: ★★★★★
SCI-FI LEGACY: ★★★★★
FAN-FOLLOWING: ★★★★★
COMBAT SKILLS: ★★★★★
INTELLIGENCE: ★★★★★

■ LIKE ANY other chimp, Cornelius wanted a normal, quiet life; which was quickly made difficult by his other half, Zira, after she persuaded him to help astronaut, Taylor. The intelligent, good guy/ape later proved to the monkey world that apes didn't evolve from humans – kind of like Charles Darwin's monkey twin. Played by Robby McDowall, who later went on to voice his son Milo/Caesar, he's the protagonist of the initial novel and first three movie instalments from the 1960s-70s. The central simian of 2011's *Rise Of The Planet Of The Apes* is a shout-out to Cornelius' offspring, and we've no doubt branches of his family tree – literal or spiritual – will be cropping up for generations to come.

THE FATHER OF THE PLANET OF THE APEES

HOW THE APE DYNASTY OF CORNELIUS AND CAESAR AND THE BIGGEST SCI-FI MOVIE OF THE SIXTIES CAPTURED THE IMAGINATION OF THE WORLD

In a fitting manner for a piece of time-travel sci-fi, *Planet Of The Apes* features conventions from multiple periods scattered throughout film history. Despite being made in 1968, its title and premise could just have easily have come from the previous decade when sensationalist titles like *Earth Vs The Flying Saucers* and *Invasion Of The Body Snatchers* were common. Likewise, the film's pioneering use of make-up, as well as its move toward franchise merchandising, pre-dates similar traits which would be fundamental to the success of the *Star War* series, which came nine years later.

The themes at the heart of its story, however, were pure Sixties. This decade was one of the most tumultuous in American history. In the midst of the Cold War, protests against the conflict in Vietnam, and the American Civil Rights movement, the period was defined by social unrest and shockingly punctuated by the assassinations of John F Kennedy, Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. These events certainly cast a dark shadow over the America of the Sixties but the same decade also held glimmers of optimism for the country. In 1961, Alan Shepard became the first American in space and, a year later, John Glenn became the first to orbit the Earth. And, just before the turn of the decade, on 1 December 1959, the very first colour photograph of the planet was taken from space. Such imagery had a profound impact on America and the rest of the world; highlighting the unity of the planet's populace, they promoted a sense of peace and community, while the space race as a whole created a sense of optimism that mankind could find meaning beyond the new frontiers of the solar system.

**"Take your
stinking paws
off me, you
damned dirty
ape!"**

Earlier entities, like Gene Roddenberry's *Star Trek* series, obviously took inspiration from this wave of optimism in 1966 but, in 1968, *Planet Of The Apes* hit the big screen with a story that combined the period's stargazing sense of hope with the dark feelings of political and social unrest that had defined the decade. Though the film drew audiences into the cinema with its exciting premise of an astronaut who crash-lands on a planet of hostile ape-men, the underlying content was actually much closer to home – in more ways than one.

Lead actor, Charlton Heston was known for his noble or heroic roles in the likes of *The Ten Commandments*, *Touch Of Evil* and *Ben-Hur* at the time, but *Planet Of The Apes* saw him take control of a much less positive character. As George Taylor, Heston played an astronaut so cynical and deluded with 20th Century civilisation that he volunteers for an 18 month voyage, knowing that Earth will age several hundred years more before his return due to time dilation. Taylor hates his Earth so much that he is willing to risk

losing it forever but he also retains a small hope that man will have stopped 'waging war on his brother' by the time that he returns.

When he does eventually land, however, Taylor finds himself on an unknown planet, which he believes is located 320 light years away from Earth. On this planet, humans are unspeaking primitives and the land is ruled by a race of civilised and intelligent speaking apes. These ape people take Taylor captive for scientific experimentation and the astronaut discovers, much to his horror, that this strange alien

SIMIAN SEQUELS

The most memorable scenes from the four Apes sequels

BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES

Charlton Heston bows out of the *Planet Of The Apes* series with a bang. Shot dead by one of Zaius's grunts he cries, "It's Armageddon", before falling on a detonator that sets off a nuclear bomb and destroys the whole planet.



ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE APES

Just before the Earth's destruction, Zira and Cornelius escape into space and travel back in time to the 20th Century. There they are questioned in court and when Cornelius is asked if he can talk, he replies, "Only when she lets me", much to the amusement of the entire courtroom.

CONQUEST OF THE PLANET OF THE APES

After the murder of his adoptive human father, Caesar rebels against the human populace and musters a force of disenfranchised apes to riot and, potentially, kill. At the climax of the film he rallies against the oppression of his 'people' and swears to bring human society to its knees.



BATTLE FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES

After his young son is killed by a gorilla, Caesar battles the criminal in a high tree and pushes him to his death, breaking his own law that 'no ape shall kill ape'. From there he realises that he is no better than the humans and attempts to try and live in peace with them, even though the pre-destined future tells him this is ultimately an impossible feat.



Heston fought in vain to stop a sequel being made.

➤ culture is just as cruel and hypocritical as the one he had sought to leave behind.

On the 'planet of the apes' he finds a society that is divided into three strict classes and a law that is governed by both science and religion – two doctrines that clearly, to Taylor, contradict each other. In effect, the ape culture holds a mirror up to our own, showing us just how ridiculous and petty human flaws really are by making them just unfamiliar enough. Much of the film sees Taylor trying to justify himself to the ruling class of orangutans, who wish to downplay his evolutionary significance and deny the existence of intelligent humans from the rest of the ape populace, in order to protect their own ideologies. Two individuals who take the chance to help defend Taylor are a scientist and archaeologist from the middle level chimp class, called Zira and Cornelius. Though members of a relatively privileged caste, the chimps have no real power and risk losing their careers by siding with a human as dangerous to ape culture as Taylor.

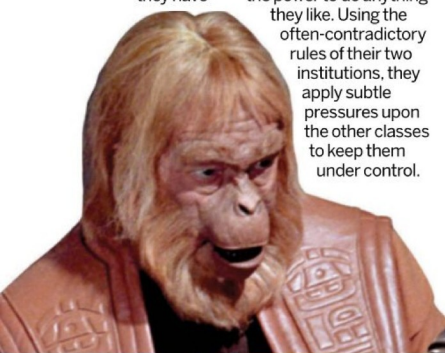
This conflict of ideals leads to one of the greatest scenes in *Planet Of The Apes*, where Taylor is put on trial in an ape court. Here he is subjected to a series of circular, illogical questions that prompt him to declare that some apes are "more equal than others" (a smart reference to Orwell's *Animal Farm*) and are ultimately designed to draw out more support from Zira and

ORIGIN OF THE SPECIES

The various classes of ape society

ORANG-UTAN

The ginger-haired orang-utans are the ruling class of the ape world. Controlling both the legal system and the church, they have the power to do anything they like. Using the often-contradictory rules of their two institutions, they apply subtle pressures upon the other classes to keep them under control.



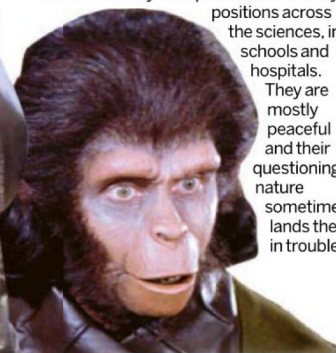
GORILLA

The working class of ape society, gorillas form the backbone of the nation, occupying positions throughout the military as well as the service industry. The gorillas are typically unquestioning and, when hunting for humans, will relish the opportunity to act cruelly. In the formative years of ape civilisation they fought for power with the other classes but ultimately lost out.



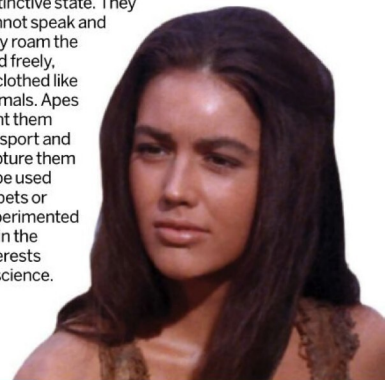
CHIMP

Chimpanzees occupy the middle level between the ape classes. They have no real power but live privileged lives and are well educated. Many chimps work in scholarly positions across the sciences, in schools and hospitals. They are mostly peaceful and their questioning nature sometimes lands them in trouble.



HUMAN

In the fictional future of *Planet Of The Apes*, humans have devolved to a primitive, instinctive state. They cannot speak and they roam the land freely, unclothed like animals. Apes hunt them for sport and capture them to be used as pets or experimented on in the interests of science.



Heston prepares for his membership in the NRA.

BEHIND THE MASKS

The lead apes and the actors who played them

ZIRA

Played by Kim Hunter

A formerly blacklisted Hollywood legend and supporter of the Civil Rights movement, Hunter identified with the commentary in *Apes* and relished the opportunity to play Zira in three of the films. In scenes that were shot from behind she kept the make-up on unnecessarily as she didn't feel in character without it.



CORNELIUS/CAESAR

Played by Roddy McDowall

This London-born actor appeared in four of the five films, twice as Cornelius and twice more as that character's son, Caesar.

McDowall was instrumental in pioneering 'ape acting', which involved over-exaggerating every movement of the face so that it would convey through the make-up. In 1995 he admitted that the masks were so unbearable, they often reduced him to tears.



DR ZAIUS

Played by

Maurice Evans

Oscar winning actor Edward G. Robinson was originally supposed to play Dr Zaius but dropped out after the initial test shots, complaining that he could not bear a whole shoot under the make-up. Maurice Evans was drafted in to replace him and did a terrific job in the first two movies.



Cornelius and reveal the anti-establishment thoughts bubbling away within them.

The scene is reminiscent of the McCarthy hearings of the Fifties, which had led to *Apes* screenwriter Michael Wilson being blacklisted from Hollywood, where he was forced to work uncredited for eight years on works like *The Bridge On The River Kwai* and *Lawrence Of Arabia*. And Wilson wasn't the only one to weave his own experiences into the *Apes* screenplay. Co-writer Rod Serling had previously penned the *Twilight Zone* TV series, which often ran stories dealing with issues of racism and war, and was an outspoken supporter of the American Civil Liberties Union, which had lobbied for, among other things, a separation of Church and State.

All of these themes and influences found their way into *Planet Of The Apes*, but always in a very subtle way, and it was therefore not necessary to recognise them in order to simply watch and enjoy the film. Indeed, 20th Century Fox executive Richard D Zanuck, who was a producer at the time *Apes* was filmed, later revealed in a 1998 documentary that he was completely unaware of any commentary in the film and saw it only as an enjoyable family adventure with a science fiction slant.

In some ways Zanuck was right. Audiences flocked to cinemas to see *Planet Of The Apes*, attracted by the star appeal of Charlton Heston, they left marvelling at the incredibly believable ape make-up, enthralled by the dramatic story and shocked by the twist ending, which revealed that Taylor had been on a post-apocalyptic Earth all along. The film grossed over \$32 million at the box office, nearly six times its budget. The film had become a

phenomenon and, despite the script's conclusive ending, Fox demanded that a sequel be made. In fact, four sequels were made between 1970 and 1973, followed by a live-action TV series in 1974 and an animated show in 1975. As with most franchises, the quality of the *Apes* series steadily declined with the passing of each new entry. The talent of the

original film moved on to bigger and better things, budgets were cut in line with the law of diminishing returns and a consistent tone was sacrificed, as producers shuffled directors and pushed for family-friendly ratings.

Two constants did remain throughout the sequels, however. Actor Roddy McDowall, who had played Cornelius in the first film, reprised the role in third film *Escape From The Planet Of The Apes* and took the role of Cornelius's son, Caesar, in

"You know the saying, 'Human see, human do'"

DIRTY APES



- 1 Taylor tries to escape from his captors and is chased all over the village by the military gorillas.
- 2 The gorillas eventually catch him in a net and hoist him into the air.
- 3 Regaining his voice he yells the immortal line, "Take your stinking paws off me, you damned dirty ape".

KISS GOODBYE



- 1 Taylor asks if he can kiss Zira goodbye, and she replies: "You're just so ugly."
- 2 He kisses the lady chimp anyway and she seems to thoroughly enjoy it.
- 3 Taylor and Zira's partners look on in horror at the inter-species kiss.

LIBERTY LOST

subheading



- 1 Before Taylor heads to the Forbidden Zone, Zaius warns he might not like what he finds.
- 2 Along the coast he discovers a half-destroyed Statue of Liberty, revealing that he's been on Earth all along.
- 3 "You maniacs! You blew it up! Ah, damn you! God damn you all to hell."

NO EVIL



- 1 Taylor is taken to court to be tried for no apparent crime other than his existence.
- 2 Zira gives a rather convincing argument that criticises the orang-utans' beliefs.
- 3 Unable to accept what she says, the orang-utans regress into three very familiar positions.

WHO IS PIERRE BOULLE?

The man behind the Monkey Planet

Born February 1912, Pierre Boulle was a great French novelist, best remembered for two books that were later adapted into films. One was the classic *Bridge On The River Kwai* (1952) and the other was *Monkey Planet* (1963), which was later adapted into *Planet Of The Apes*.

Boulle fought in the French army during World War II and remarkably became a secret agent in China and Burma. In 1943 he was captured by Vichy France loyalists and was subjected to forced labour and cruel treatment, which eventually influenced the writing of both of his most famous novels.

Interestingly, Boulle wrote an ending for *Monkey Planet* that was very different to the one used in the *Planet Of The Apes* film. In Boulle's ending the *Monkey Planet* is not Earth but when main character, Ulysse, later escapes, he eventually finds his way back to Earth to find that his planet has ironically evolved to the point where apes rule. Boulle later admitted that he preferred the more shocking ending of the film and that he wished he'd come up with it himself.

Though Boulle's involvement with the *Apes* franchises extends only to the book and its adaptation, he was commissioned to write a sequel, which he called *Planet Of The Men*, but it was turned down by 20th Century Fox and never developed beyond the script stage. In 1994, Boulle died in his home country, aged 82.



The apes drove cars in the novel but rode horses in the film.



The *Apes* series was not afraid to be disturbing.



Beneath introduced mutant humans into the mix.



Ricardo Montalban (*Star Trek's* Khan) in another classic sci-fi role.

➤ *Conquest Of The Planet Of The Apes* and *Battle For The Planet Of The Apes*. Behind the scenes, screenwriter Paul Dehn was hired to scribe each sequel and did a fair job of keeping the franchise's political edge sharp.

Though some of the sequels were a little heavy handed with their allegory – see *Beneath The Planet Of The Apes'* focus on military protest and nuclear war – others were just as effective as the original film. *Escape From The Planet Of The Apes*, in particular, is an interesting case. It flips the scenario of the first film on its head, landing Cornelius and Zira on 20th Century Earth and following their exploits as outsiders in our own world. At first the pair become media celebrities, as America becomes fascinated by the talking primates, but things soon take a turn for the sinister. When Zira and Cornelius are taken shopping and are dressed up in the clothes of their new benefactors, it's treated as a lighthearted joke but there is an underlying current to the scene that drags up uncomfortable parallels with the objectification of black people during 18th Century colonialism. Furthermore, the apes are tolerated when they are nothing more than a novelty source of amusement but as soon as Zira reveals that she is pregnant, she becomes a threat to the humans as the seeds of a new, potentially dominant, race are sown.

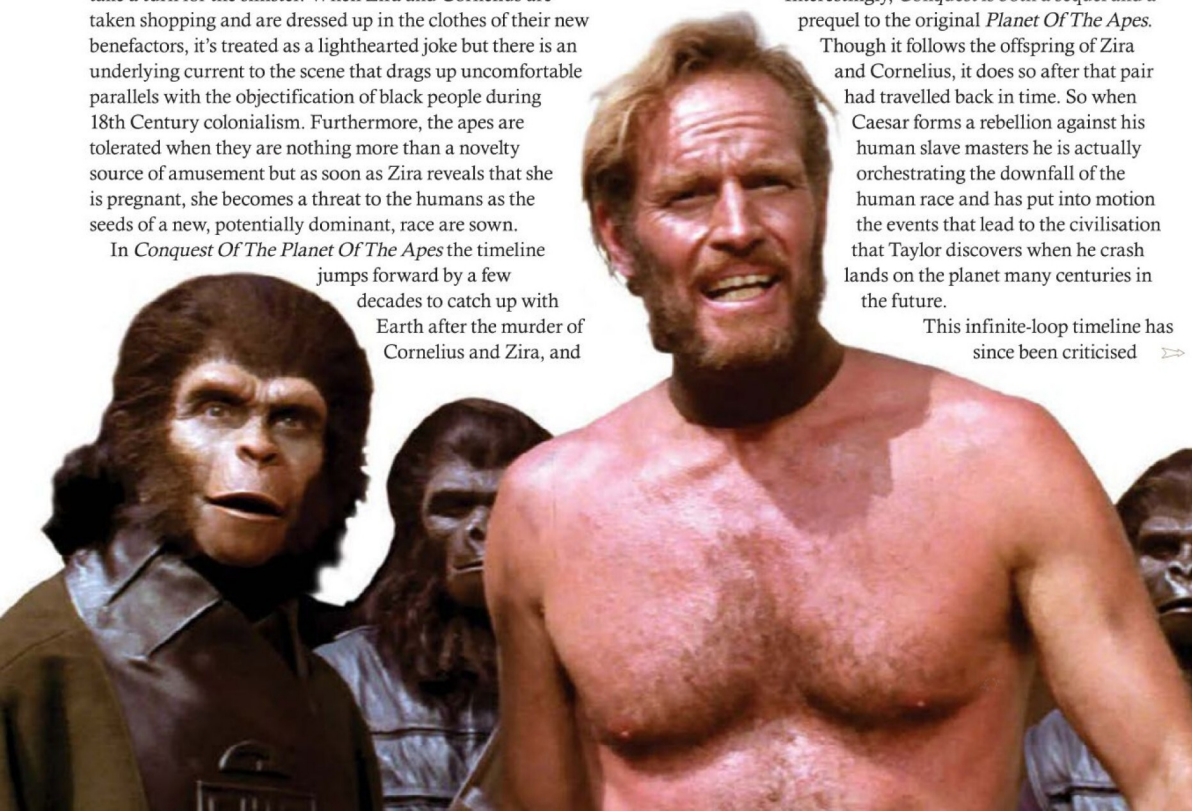
In *Conquest Of The Planet Of The Apes* the timeline jumps forward by a few decades to catch up with Earth after the murder of Cornelius and Zira, and

what we see is the most disturbing yet most socially realistic scenario so far. The world of *Conquest* is a distant future of our own, in which America is ruled by a neo-fascist state on the brink of totalitarianism. Ape kind has evolved since the arrival of Zira and Cornelius, and though it hasn't yet reached the full mental capacity seen in the earlier films, the race has become enough of a threat for humans to take drastic action against them. Many are confined to labour camps while the 'privileged' few have become the personal slaves of the upper classes. Among this powerless mass of ape people hides Caesar, the speech-capable son of Cornelius, who eventually becomes so bitter at his people's mistreatment that he plots a revolution to overthrow mankind.

Interestingly, *Conquest* is both a sequel and a prequel to the original *Planet Of The Apes*.

Though it follows the offspring of Zira and Cornelius, it does so after that pair had travelled back in time. So when Caesar forms a rebellion against his human slave masters he is actually orchestrating the downfall of the human race and has put into motion the events that lead to the civilisation that Taylor discovers when he crash lands on the planet many centuries in the future.

This infinite-loop timeline has since been criticised ➤



AND THE REST...

Further adventures of the apes

TV SERIES

As the profitability of the films declined, Fox moved *Apes* to TV screens with this short-lived live-action series. Of the 14 episodes that were filmed, only 13 were shown before the programme was cancelled.

The series as a whole is unremarkable but it did star Roddy McDowall as Galen, in his third unique ape role.

CARTOON

Aired the year after the TV show, the animation was called *Return To The Planet Of The Apes* and featured a planet more in line with the Pierre Boulle novel, in which the apes inhabit a futuristic society, driving cars and piloting their own personal aircraft.

COMICS

Twelve different publishers across the world, including the UK, US, Japan and Hungary, have produced their own official *Planet Of The Apes* comics but the most famous is probably the Marvel series, which ran between 1974 and 1977 and was later reprinted by Marvel UK.

VIDEOGAMES

The original *Planet Of The Apes* film was made about a decade before the advent of videogames and missed out on an official adaptation. Around the time of Tim Burton's remake, however, Ubisoft made the decision to produce a game based on the 1968 original for PC, PlayStation and Game Boy.



The make-up is one of many of *Apes'* triumphs.

by some fans for creating a predestination paradox, in which the rules of causality contradict the situation, but there is something rather poetic about the way in which the fates of humans and apes are intertwined so. Unfortunately, however, that circular timeline was monkeyed with a little when Fox got cold feet over the final film, *Battle For The Planet Of The Apes*. Although box-office takings for *Conquest* were profitable, some audiences reacted poorly to the film's overly violent riot scenes and the overall pessimistic flavour. Attempting to rein the franchise back in toward family fun, Fox demanded that *Battle* be much more palatable than *Conquest*, which created some problems for the timeline that writer Paul Dehn had created.

Set somewhere between the ape revolution and the arrival of Taylor on the planet, and knowing that this would be the last film, the natural story to tell would have been the destruction of the human race as an intelligent civilisation. Fox's wishes prevented such an apocalyptic ending, however, and instead, *Battle* concluded with the now dominant apes trying to get along with the few surviving, still speaking, humans. Only the film's final shot – a crying statue of Caesar – hinted at the doom that the character (and audience) knew was surely around the corner.

And there the classic *Planet Of The Apes* films came to an end. In some ways this was a shame, as few, if any other, big franchises ever dared to tackle such a wide range of social and political issues while also turning a profit. In other ways, however, it was clear that the series could not continue in its current form. During pre-production on the second film, *Beneath The Planet Of The Apes*, Fox had trouble convincing Charlton Heston to return. Heston agreed to make a cameo at the beginning and end of the film only, on the condition that they kill off his character and that the film end with the destruction of the planet. Heston feared that the original movie would be devalued by endless sequels that degrade the property into the equivalent of a Saturday morning serial.

Heston's demands did nothing to stop the franchise marching on, of course, and though Paul Dehn kept the political commentary rolling, the overall quality did decline. Fox's insistence on focus testing the sequels led to some severe cuts, particularly in *Conquest*, which had its ending re-written and its opening credits sequence, depicting brutality against the ape slaves, was completely removed. The move toward more family-friendly content was directly at odds with the thematics of the franchise, while the regular budget cuts made the films look increasingly shoddy. Some of the big crowd scenes in *Beneath*

TIMELINE OF THE APES

1972

Taylor and his crew embark on an exploratory mission into deep space and, seemingly, never return.

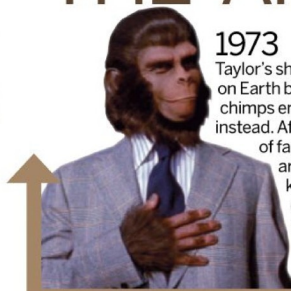


1972

Astronaut Brent is sent on a reconnaissance mission to track the missing Taylor. He too never returns.

1973

Taylor's ship lands back on Earth but three talking chimps emerge from it instead. After a brief period of fame, the apes are eventually killed, but they do leave a child behind with a sympathetic circus owner.



The story of the films put into chronological order

1991

That baby chimp grows up and names himself Caesar. By this point humans have enslaved apes and Caesar sets out to free them and subjugate the humans.



2001

The Earth is ravaged by nuclear war, leaving only a few humans and apes alive. Apes rule under Caesar and a few humans unsuccessfully battle for freedom.



Escape attempted to show prejudice in a new light.



CORNELIUS



Episode IV was nominated for a Best



Later films made the best of a reduced budget.

required the ape actors to wear cost-effective masks that looked laughable compared to the prosthetics of the lead actors. Later films cut the number of on-screen apes down to a minimum and used the setting of contemporary America in order to cut costs even further and, by the final film, director J Lee Thompson was forced to film the climactic combat sequences using close-ups and fast cuts in order to mask the fact that very few extras and vehicles were in use.

If the *Planet Of The Apes* series had come to a complete halt with *Battle* then the series might garner more respect today than it currently gets. Sadly, however, the apes have kept coming back for more and have never managed to regain the credibility they built in 1968. After considering a sixth film in 1973, Fox decided instead to pursue *Apes* through the medium of television. A live-action TV series was broadcast in 1974, followed by a cartoon by the name of *Return To The Planet Of The Apes* the next year. And though Seventies kids may remember these action-adventure serials with fondness, the TV shows did nothing to help the flagging franchise. Relying heavily on formulaic plot and lacking any of the films' thematic substance, they are best

**"You Maniacs!
You blew it up!
Ah, damn you!
God damn you
all to hell!"**

forgotten as part of the larger *Apes* property. Likewise, Tim Burton's 2001 remake of the original film, though visually accomplished and featuring a strong cast, was panned by critics and confused audiences with its new twist ending, that was actually closer to the one in the original Pierre Boulle novel.

In 2011 the franchise climbed back on top with Rupert Wyatt's *Rise Of The Planet Of The Apes* proving the summer's wildcard hit, and a sequel – *Dawn Of The Planet Of The Apes* – arrived in 2014. Despite a heavyweight cast, including Gary Oldman and Kodi Smit-McPhee, director Wyatt dropped out over concerns that the follow-up was being rushed in order to hit a 2014 release (he was replaced by with *Cloverfield* director Matt Reeves), which seems an ill omen for a series more moving back into the blockbuster limelight. Nevertheless, *Dawn* was released to significant acclaim, though whether this return to form will continue through to its upcoming sequel remains to be seen.

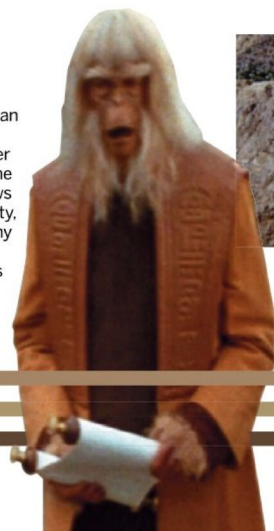
Indeed, if there's one thing that all the *Apes* movies have in common it's that they all end on a downbeat note and with some uncertainty over where we will go from here. It would be wrong to end this feature in any other way.



PLANET OF THE APES: 5 MOVIE COLLECTOR'S EDITION is available on DVD and Blu-ray from 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment priced at £8.99.

2600

An orang-utan known as The Lawgiver lays down the principle laws of ape society, removing any account of the previous human civilisation from public record.



3978

Taylor crash lands on the planet after 2006 years in space. He has hardly aged at all due to the effects of time dilation.

3978

Brent lands on the planet a few months after Taylor. He eventually tracks him down only moments before the destruction of the planet.



3978

Zira, Cornelius and Dr Milo escape the planet in Taylor's ship just before it is destroyed and travel back in time to 1973.





The 50 Greatest Sci-fi Icons

FROM TIME LORDS
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