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THE WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN

by John Knott

We examine Pierre Boulle's legendary simian satire and discover *LA PLANÈTE DES SINGES* is a lot darker than you might have thought...

When you recall that iconic Statue of Liberty moment in *Planet of the Apes* (1968), only one phrase springs to mind. Yep, it's "Vive la France!" every time. What? You were thinking of something else? Well call us odd [*You're odd! – Ed*] but what could be more Gallic? After all, as every schoolboy knows, France is the birthplace of both Lady Liberty and Planet of the Apes.

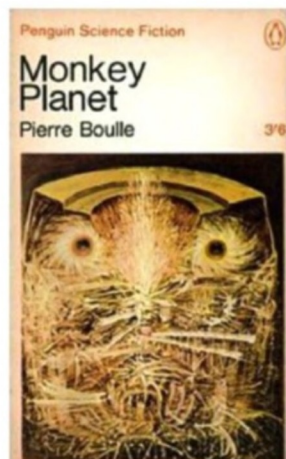
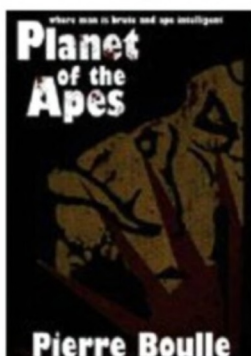
The mighty Rod Serling may have written the movie's screenplay but the original story actually comes from French author Pierre Boulle's 1963 novel *La Planète des singes*, or *Monkey Planet* if you prefer (and you can jolly well look up the 1870s origin of Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi's most famous sculpture yourself). Boulle had been working in Malaysia at the outbreak of the Second World War and ended up as a spy in China, Burma, and Indochina before the Vichy French

(the pro-Nazis who controlled unoccupied France after its surrender) captured him on the Mekong River in 1943. He was given a life sentence of hard labour but escaped the following year and finished the war working for the British in India before his eventual return to Paris. But it was his experiences in captivity that are supposed to have inspired his two most famous works. In 1952 he published *Le Pont de la rivière Kwaï* (or *Bridge on the River Kwai* – yes, we at STARBURST like to up your pub-quiz knowledge) in which the influence of his wartime experiences were easy to see. However, with those monkeys, it was less obvious.

If you've not read it then *La Planète* is worth a go even if the translation has rather more use of the word

"hullabaloo" than one suspects Boulle intended. It is also a book that could be regarded as rather more controversial than its reputation would suggest. Well maybe that's just our opinion...

Basically it follows roughly the same plot as the film (right down to the ape caste system, the hunting trophy scene, and the human doll) with a couple of important differences. Firstly, these apes were technologically advanced. In the end that doesn't really make too much difference to the story and the only reason the film had the early-industrial setting (in which the apes appear not to have a steam engine; can't make straight doors or iron bars but have managed a



rather spiffy-looking rifle) was to keep the budget down; Serling had originally intended a similar technological level to the novel. But an important difference (big spoiler in the unlikely event you know nothing of POTA) is that this was not Earth, but the planet *Soror*. In fact, the whole post-apocalyptic element you might be familiar with was entirely absent. So if you read anywhere that Boule was tapping into Cold War fears of Armageddon (and we've certainly seen that written) then you'll probably find that's something by someone who hasn't actually read it. Shocking, but there it is. There's no Statue of Liberty moment (that was a piece of Serling-genius) and the twist-ending has more in common with Tim Burton's much maligned re-imagined version.

One of the strengths of the 1968 movie was the fact that the exact circumstances of the rise of the apes was left to your imagination. Fans of the rest of the franchise, in which the story is told in painstaking detail and includes a bit of time travel (always a dodgy premise for this kind of thing), are probably not going to agree with this assertion but there is something rather terrifying in not knowing exactly how this "mad house" came about. Sure, we blew it up (God damn us all to hell), but that doesn't quite explain how we forgot how to talk and let the apes take over; that's just something you're left to wonder about. But Boule really goes for it in his novel with a bit of human vivisection and some glimpses into the past via some rather convenient "racial memory" nonsense. Now this could have been a weakness in the story but the way in which apes who had been taught to speak gradually change from servants into rebels while the humans just lie down and take it is genuinely chilling. The fact that it doesn't involve a humanity-bothering cataclysm just makes the Fall of Man all the more horrifying.

But what's all this got to do with Boule's experiences as a POW? Well on one hand

there's clearly an exploration of man's reaction to captivity. Ulysse, the human hero, is stoic at the hands of the apes, much like Taylor (Charlton Heston) in the movie. But his companion, the apparently more intelligent Professor Antelle, regresses to the animal state of Soror's native humans with whom they share their imprisonment. While Antelle's reaction is disturbing enough, there was also, perhaps, something even darker to all this.

La Planète is essentially about a world turned upside down. The apes' and humans' roles are entirely reversed; even down to the apes carrying out experiments on the humans just as we have done on with apes on Earth. It's often said that this was just Boule making a comment on our relationship with animals. But, without boring you all with a history lesson [*I bet he does – Ed*], it's important to understand the mindset of a European colonial at the time of Boule's WWII experiences. Details of his actual imprisonment are sketchy but even though he was captured by his Vichy countrymen, it's important to remember that control of parts of Indochina, including Saigon where Boule was imprisoned, had been ceded to the Japanese shortly after France's European defeat [*And he's off – Ed*]. In other words, Boule was as much a prisoner of the Japanese as he was the Vichy and it's perfectly possible that much of his incarceration was with the Japanese. In fact, the Japanese (who had been at war with China since 1937) were about to dominate South East Asia much as European Imperialists of various nations had been doing before the war. It wasn't just the French; the Dutch were defeated in Indonesia, the Americans removed from the Philippines and no one was quite so humiliated as the British at Singapore. The early years of the Pacific war had the Allies entirely on the back foot; partly because of the overstretched resources of their far-flung empires but also

through complacency and a belief in their own superiority. These westerners had regarded the Japanese (and indeed Asians in general) as weaker than them and yet they were now the masters. When Boule's account of the end of human dominance reads "Now they hold the town... We sleep; we are incapable of organising ourselves for resistance..." he seems to be speaking of the entire western experience at the hands of the Japanese up until the Battle of Midway. It's uncomfortable for our modern sensibilities but ultimately Boule's apes were the Japanese.

That's not to say that Boule was a racist; certainly not by the standards of his day. After all, *La Planète* is a satire. We are supposed to be horrified by the apes' treatment of the humans and, therefore, question our own treatment of those we regard as our inferiors because, just maybe, the boot could be on the other foot. In other words, who were we to be regarding anyone as inferior? But the Japanese-as-ape idea is not something that sits well with the 21st century reader. In fact, it's something that a lot of analyses of the text tend to skip over, ignore or reject altogether. If you've read it, you probably have your own opinion and it might well be a different interpretation. But, nevertheless, there's probably no way *La Planète* could get written today (if only because the war in the Pacific is no longer a recent memory) and that's probably a good thing.

La Planète des singes is an effective and horrifying satire even if one can't help thinking that Serling's screenplay was just that little bit cleverer than Boule's novel. On the other hand, it was Boule's idea so credit where it's due. Ultimately, if you're a POTA fan (or even if you're not) give it a read but remember that, like most art, it's very much a product of its time.





Ape-Ocalypse Now

by Jon Towlson



When producer Arthur P. Jacobs bought the rights to Pierre Boulle's novel *MONKEY PLANET* in 1963, little did he know it would take him five years to bring it to the screen. But when the original *PLANET OF THE APES* finally hit cinemas in 1968, audiences went bananas, and one of the most successful sci-fi franchises of all time was born. Join us as we take an in-depth look back at that first Apes saga...

PLANET OF THE APES



"He'd even designed and built Spock's ears in *Star Trek*, but transforming actors into apes was his biggest challenge."

"You maniacs! You blew it up! Damn you! Damn you all to hell!" Who can forget the astonishing ending of the original *Planet of the Apes* (1968), and those words screamed by Charlton Heston as the camera lingers on the hulking ruins of the Statue of Liberty, only its upper torso, head and torch remaining? For those of us introduced to the world of the Apes on television in the 1970s, the film's ending – unremitting in its bleakness – remains indelibly etched in our consciousness. And the sequels that followed were no less downbeat. Indeed it's hard to imagine such a grimly apocalyptic movie series as the original Apes films even existing today (save perhaps Fox's rebooted instalments in the saga). But the five original Apes movies, which tell the story of how apes evolved from man, constitute one of the most successful sci-fi franchises of all time, striking a deep chord with both audiences and reviewers alike. Critics read all kinds of social comment in the films, such as relating them to the turbulent era of late 1960s/early 1970s America: racial strife, anti-war sentiment, clashes between youth and authority. And for audiences around the world, seeing civilisation as we know it come to an end seemed to have a strangely cathartic effect.

The original Apes series came into being when producer Arthur P. Jacobs bought the rights to Pierre Boulle's novel *La Planète des singes* in 1965. Jacobs started as an office boy at MGM before becoming a movie publicist. His first film as producer was *What A Way To Go* (1964) starring Paul Newman and Shirley MacLaine. Jacobs was about to produce *Dr. Doolittle* (1967) for Fox when he came across Boulle's novel in gallery form and went, well, ape, over this very different kind of talking animal. He commissioned a screenplay from *Twilight Zone* creator Rod Serling and took the project to Richard Zanuck, the then head of 20th Century Fox. Zanuck turned him down flat. In fact, it would take Jacobs another five years to get *Planet of the Apes* made. The concept of talking monkeys was deemed far too preposterous for a movie.

Somewhere along the line, Jacobs realised he needed a star to give him leverage. He approached Charlton Heston, biblical actor of yore who had become immortalised as *Ben Hur* in 1959. Heston saw the possibilities of the project and brought on board heavyweight epic director Franklin J. Schaffner (*Patton*, 1970, *Papillon*, 1973, *Boys from Brazil*, 1978). Jacobs had pitched *Planet of the Apes* to every major studio – and all turned him down – when Zanuck eventually came back to bankroll the project.

But even Zanuck had his reservations. What had concerned everyone right from the start was the problem of how to make the ape make-up look believable. Enter make-up artist supremo John Chambers.

Chambers, who would go on to win an Oscar for his work on *Planet of the Apes*, had been a hospital consultant specialising in dentistry, making prosthetic appliances for disfigured war veterans before breaking into the movies in the early '60s. He worked on TV shows like *The Outer Limits*, *The Munsters* and *Lost in Space*. He'd even designed and built Spock's ears in *Star Trek*, but transforming actors into apes was his biggest challenge. Eventually he designed a three piece appliance made out of latex, consisting of nose and forehead (one piece), jaw and wig, individually tailored to each cast member. The makeup costs would eventually amount to \$1 million dollars of the film's overall \$5.8 million budget.

Even with the make-up problem solved, Zanuck was still wary and ordered Jacobs to slash costs on the production: Fox were in financial difficulties after the failure of several big movies at the box office, including Jacobs' *Dr. Doolittle*. Feeling the pressure, Jacobs was forced to rethink the whole concept, and it was Schaffner who suggested changing the highly advanced

BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES



technological Apes society in Serling's draft (the Apes even had flying cars!) to the much more primitive, rustic one we know and love in the movie today. Bond scribe and producer Michael G. Wilson was brought in to make the budget-saving rewrite, and after *Fantastic Voyage* (1967) became an unexpected hit for Fox, and *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) made sci-fi suddenly respectable, *Planet of the Apes* was finally greenlit.

In the first film, Taylor (Heston) captains an interstellar exploration team whose ship crash lands on a seemingly barren Earth-like planet. After being captured by gorillas that kill his fellow astronauts, Taylor realises he has entered a world where evolution has gone backwards: apes talk and humans are mute. Only the liberal minded chimpanzee doctors Cornelius (Roddy McDowell) and his wife, Zira (Kim Hunter), show any compassion for his plight, while Dr Zaius (Maurice Evans), the head of the Ape Assembly, tries to cover up his existence for fear that it might lead to an unearthing of the truth about the ape evolution.

The public went bananas for *Planet of the Apes*, and it became a huge box-office smash, going on to make \$32.6 million in ticket sales. Jerry Goldsmith won an Oscar nomination for his music score and Chambers won an honorary Oscar for Outstanding Make-Up Achievement. The critics were generally positive, immediately picking up on the film's social commentary. "*Planet of the Apes* is an anti-war film and a science fiction liberal tract", pronounced Renata Adler of *The New York Times*, before adding, "It's no good at all, but fun, at moments, to watch." Roger Ebert was less equivocal: "much better than I expected it to be. It is quickly paced, completely entertaining, and its philosophical pretensions don't get in the way". Even the

notoriously difficult to please Pauline Kael called it "one of the best science-fiction fantasies ever to come out of Hollywood" (although she did then go on to say, "That doesn't mean it's art").

With *Planet of the Apes* going Bonzo at the box office, Zanuck immediately pressured Jacobs into a sequel. Jacobs needed some persuasion (he'd never planned a series and indeed several times down the years after *Planet of the Apes* announced that each successive film in the franchise would be the last): how could he possibly go beyond the original film's apocalyptic conclusion? Going back to Boule and Serling, Jacobs commissioned a number of proposals from both writers but, dissatisfied, ended up rejecting them all. He needed a visual shock to rival that of the original – but what? In desperation Jacobs turned to Manchester-born veteran British screenwriter Paul Dehn, best known for *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (1964) and *Goldfinger* (co-written with Richard Maibaum, 1965). Just as he had helped to solidify the Bond formula with *Goldfinger*, Dehn nailed the story for *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* and for all of the subsequent sequels. Many of the franchise's most ingenious ideas – like the time loop structure, for example – were Dehn's. For *Beneath*, he came up with the idea of showing the whole of New York City buried underground and run by mutant survivors of a nuclear holocaust. And he managed to top the apocalyptic finale of the previous film by ending *Beneath* (spoiler alert!) with the detonation of an Alpha-Omega doomsday bomb that destroys the entire planet!

With script for the sequel finally in hand, Jacobs went in search of a director (Schaffner was, by then, busy on *Patton* and had to bow out of the sequel), eventually settling on Ted Post, a TV

director who had broken into features directing his *Rawhide* buddy Clint Eastwood in *Hang 'Em High* (1968), before scoring several hits and eventually returning to TV in the '80s. Post had started out in theatre, and had even directed Bela Lugosi in summer stock as *Dracula* in 1948; he also went on to make the cult oddity, *The Baby* (1973), one of the most genuinely unsettling horror films of the 1970s. Post came on board *Beneath* on the proviso that Heston again starred. Heston agreed to appear – but only briefly, and wanted to be killed off in the opening scene. Eventually, Zanuck stepped in, persuading Heston that the story would be better served if he mysteriously disappeared in the opening scene and did not reappear again until the final scene to take his revenge on humanity by detonating the Alpha-Omega weapon.

Instead, Heston look-alike, James Franciscus, takes the lead as Brent, a fellow space traveller sent to investigate the disappearance of Taylor's ship. Like his predecessor, Brent is captured by apes and manages to escape, only to find himself stumbling into the Forbidden Zone and into the clutches of the underground mutants. Maurice Evans reprised his role as the stoical Dr. Zaius, and Kim Hunter returned as Zira. McDowell, however, was busy in England directing his first movie (*The Ballad of Tam Lin*, 1970). So sound-alike David Watson was brought in as Cornelius.

"Lacks the moral complexity and intellectual stimulation of its predecessor" the Los Angeles Herald-Examiner opined on the film's release in June 1970. Critical reaction to the first sequel was mixed, but the public's response was positive and *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* went on to make \$14 million at the box office, recouping its production cost four times over.

ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE APES

23



"After the almost overwhelming nihilism of Beneath, Jacobs and director Don Taylor decided on a lighter tone for the next sequel."

Scenes in *Beneath* depicted anti-violence demonstrations held by the peace loving chimpanzees wielding slogan daubed placards ("Wage Peace Not War"), while the war-mongering gorillas led by General Ursus (James Gregory) mount a campaign to storm the Forbidden Zone and the progressive minded Cornelius and Zira continue to clash with the arch-conservative Dr. Zaius. The film reflects the mood of America in the Vietnam era, a time when the younger generation rebelled and police fired live bullets at student demonstrators in university campuses. The film ends in a frenzy of violence that sees Brent and Taylor mown down in a rain of machine gun fire, and even the mute flower-child, Nova (Linda Harrison) is shot dead by the rampaging Gorilla army.

After the almost overwhelming nihilism of *Beneath*, Jacobs and director Don Taylor decided on a lighter tone for the next sequel. There was of course also the thorny issue of how to carry on the series having destroyed all the characters and the entire planet to boot. It was Dehn who came up with the solution. In *Escape from the Planet of the Apes* (1971), Cornelius and Zira manage to repair Taylor's spaceship and take a reverse trajectory through the time warp back to Earth in 1973. There, after the initial shock of their appearance wears off, they are treated like celebrities by the media until the authorities begin to realise the implications when Zira becomes pregnant. Then the two chimpanzees are forced to become fugitives as the military tries to hunt them down before they can trigger the end of civilisation as humans know it.

Despite its small budget and TV movie appearance, *Escape* is the best of the Apes sequels. It's funny, moving and surreal in turns, and who can forget Cornelius's classic line when asked by the President of the Committee of Inquiry



CONQUEST OF THE PLANET OF THE APES



"The race relations subtext of the previous films would come to the fore in *Conquest*, as Dehn wrote in sequences of enslaved apes rioting in the streets, reflecting the wave of race riots that had spread through the United States the previous decade."

whether he, like his wife Zira, can talk. "Only when she lets me," is the deadpan reply, much to the amusement and delight of the attending journalists. The film resonates as an allegory on race relations in America: the chimpanzees are viewed like illegal 'immigrants' into the United States and a threat to the American Way. But it also has much to say about the then-burgeoning second wave feminist movement: Zira emerges as a strong, intelligent and politicised female who puts the men to shame. The film was well received by the critics and public alike: it made \$12.3 million at the box office, and reviewers, like Frederick S. Clarke (Cinefantastique), started to view the saga as a unified body of work, calling it "the first epic of filmed science fiction".

Dehn was called upon to script the third sequel, which would become

known as *Conquest of the Planet of the Apes* (1972). The race relations subtext of the previous films would come to the fore in *Conquest*, as Dehn wrote in sequences of enslaved apes rioting in the streets, reflecting the wave of race riots that had spread through the United States the previous decade. Set in 1991, Zira's baby, the only surviving ape from *Escape*, has now grown to full chimphood and has been named Caesar. Emerging from hiding in a circus he is shocked to find society has become a virtual police state in which his fellow simians are imported from Africa by the boatload to be used as slaves. Caesar (Roddy McDowell) leads the apes in an uprising that climaxes in a pitched battle between the apes and armed baton-wielding police, with the apes emerging victorious. Seizing control from the human Governor, Caesar proclaims apes the dominator of man, and ends the film with the words, "tonight we have seen the birth of the planet of the apes." Thus *Conquest* took the saga full circle, depicting the moment of ape revolution on Earth.

Directed by the two-fisted veteran J. Lee Thompson (*The Guns of Navarone*, 1961, *Cape Fear*, 1962), *Conquest* returns to the hard edge approach of the original 1968 film. Indeed, Thompson had been involved in the franchise from the very beginning, having directed Jacobs' first feature, *What A Way To Go*, but other commitments had prevented him from directing *Planet* or the first two sequels. Thompson would also direct the fifth and

BATTLE FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES



final entry in the original saga, 1973's *Battle for the Planet of the Apes*.

"Two civilizations battle for the right to inherit what's left of the Earth". So headlines the front page of the San Simian Gazette (geddit?), a mock-up newspaper given out in cinemas as publicity for *Battle*. The film sees the survivors of the apocalypse (it is revealed that humans eventually resorted to nuclear weapons to try to quell the ape uprising of *Conquest*), both ape and human, engaged in a final battle for the planet. Caesar must face down a potential ape rebellion of gorillas led by General Aldo (Claude Akins) while also trying to fight off one last attempt by mutant humans to regain control. Although *Battle* has its moments, on the whole it feels like one sequel too many. McDowell again excels as Caesar, son of Cornelius, and there is sterling support by a stellar cast that includes legendary director John Huston, Lew Ayres, equally legendary actor and star of the classic *All Quiet on the Western Front*, with a supporting turn by Paul Williams (who the following year would memorably star in and provide the songs for the cult horror musical *Phantom of the Paradise*); even ape-tastic director John Landis turns up in a minor role. On the whole though, *Battle* feels redundant, and, after its release, Jacobs finally decided to call it a day; the extraordinarily successful and critically acclaimed Apes saga came to an end – at least for the time being – but remains one of the most exciting and culturally resonant sci-fi movie franchises of all time.

The public's desire for ape antics didn't end when the films stopped, leading to some splendid (though short-lived) small screen simian shenanigans. We revisit the TV series which recycled all the magic of the PLANET OF THE APES movies to make an often overlooked show...

PRIMETIME PRIMATES

by Ed Fortune



20th Century Fox has a long history of ending shows before they had a chance to really get started; those still mourning the likes of *Firefly* may want to consider that way back in 1974, hordes of impassioned *Planet of the Apes* fans were also foxed when the TV version of their favourite furry franchise ended after only fourteen episodes.

The lacklustre performance of the classic *Battle for the Planet of the Apes* movie in 1973 led the producers to continue the franchise on the small screen instead. The initial TV script was written by none other than *The Twilight Zone*'s very own Rod Serling, who also wrote the first *Apes* movie. The script was judged to be too dark and the entire thing was rewritten. The first episode, *Escape from Tomorrow* is a toned down version of the original feature film. Because it's a 45-minute high-speed remake of the movie that started it all, the pilot is actually pretty weak. We meet Colonel Alan Virdon and Major Peter J. Burke, NASA pilots from the far-flung future of 1980. Stumbling on a time-war, they find themselves in the year 3085AD, crash landing on Earth. Captured by apes, the hapless humans evoke the hatred of angry gorilla General Urko and are almost killed. They are set free by a chimpanzee called Galen, who's belief that man was once the dominant species on Earth makes him a heretic. A major continuity flaw is the presence of wild dogs in the first episode. Given that the premise of the entire franchise is that a great plague wiped out all dogs and cats causing humans to take apes as pets, this is a pretty important paradigm shift and has led hardcore fans to dismiss the TV series entirely, which is a pity as there are some great episodes.

The second episode, *Gladiators*, introduces the show's major plot MacGuffin: a

computer disc filled with space-flight information. The episode also pits Virdon and Burke against each other in various states of undress, though it's not as exciting as it sounds. Though Ron Harper's Colonel Virdon and James Naughton's Major Burke are supposed to be the stars of the show, it's Roddy McDowall's performance as Galen that steals it. The fact that McDowall had already played major chimpanzee roles in the movies really shows; his performance alone makes the series worth a look.

Much of the series takes place in 'The Forbidden Zone', the radiation-scorched desert that surrounds the ape cities. Conveniently, this looks a lot like the northern-California coast or parts of the 20th Century Fox backlot! By the time we get to *The Trap*, the formula for the show has become established: the astronauts and their chimpanzee friend go looking for more clues as to how to escape the planet, and the perpetually grumpy General Urko pursues them and generally makes their lives difficult. *The Trap* sees Urko and Burke trapped in the ruins of an old subway and are forced to work together until there is a sudden and inevitable betrayal.

The Good Seeds has our trio helping out some ape farmers in perhaps the duller episode of the lot. Oddly, it was also turned into a spin-off book called *Man the Fugitive*. This novelisation also contains a slightly better version of the episode *The Cure*, in which almost all the characters go mad in one way or the other. *The Cure* is one of the weakest tales in the series, with the humans somehow being able to cure malaria.

The show suffered from being a watered down version of the movies; not only when it came to special effects and

talent, over-arching themes of its predecessors such as social and racial equality took a backseat also. Worse still, Virdon and Burke spend a lot of time upstaging and out-smarting ape society, teaching the stupid primitive monkeys how to rotate crops or fish effectively, spreading hope where they can. Many fans feel that this reverses the hopeless and apocalyptic vibe of the feature films, thematically disconnecting the series from the franchise.

However, when it got it right, it really got it right. *The Deception* allows all of the actors to shine. Set in a small village, the humans befriend a blind chimp called Fauna. Believing the astronauts to be chimps, they become friends and there is some genuine tenderness between Burke and Fauna. Meanwhile, Galen infiltrates a band of Gorilla extremists called the Dragoons. It's a marvellous exploration of prejudice, filled with genuine peril and some superb acting.

Another great story is *The Tyrant*. Again, Galen infiltrates ape society, this time in order to deal with a tyrant who is devastating human and ape communities. Not only does it give us a nice look into life as an ape, it also plays out like a proper crime drama. It's not quite *The Godfather*, but it's close enough!

The last episode in the series is perfectly ridiculous; *Up Above the World So High* is a reworking of the Icarus tale, but with a hang-glider rather than a magic machine made out of bird feathers. The astronauts use their super power (which is to know anything required by the plot) to manufacture ultra-light materials out of things lying around in a forest. The highlight is the glider ride itself, though this is filmed in seventies-style blue



screen with plenty of close up shots of a terrified looking Galen. Unlikely and silly, this sort of episode was far more frequent than the likes of *The Deception*, and it's easy to see why the show got canned.

After cancellation, various episodes were re-edited and generally messed around with to make TV movies. These are universally awful, with *Farewell to the Planet of the Apes* being a particularly infamous stinker, mostly because it combines two fairly weak episodes into one barely coherent, super boring whole.

The entire series did have a definitive ending of sorts. Roddy McDowall recorded a series of TV spots for syndication. In these very short extras, he plays the role of an aged Galen who explains that the two astronauts did find a way to escape the planet. He also laments that he got trapped in the past with the humans. It's been stated by the show's creators in the past they would have eventually moved the show to the modern day; partially for more story ideas and mostly because it would be cheaper to make it that way. Though this would have made Roddy McDowall the main star of the show, it does sound a little bit dull. The series may have ended before its time, but perhaps in this case it was a blessing.

The demise of the live action TV show didn't quite spell the end for the simian's small screen adventures. *Return to the Planet of the Apes* was a crudely animated take on the franchise. Where Hollywood and Fox had failed, animation factory DFE films attempted to carry the torch. The show lasted 13 episodes, though DFE went on to produce the likes of *What's New, Mister Magoo?*, *The Pink Panther Show* and the original *Spider-Woman* cartoon.

Though simply remixing the TV series into an animated format was discussed, DFE wanted to do their own thing. This suggestion did lead to the addition of a female astronaut however, in order to make it distinctly different from the live action series.

The show followed the adventures of NASA astronauts, Bill, Judy and Jeff, space explorers from the year 1976. Following a time-distortion related experiment, their spaceship the Venture crashes onto the Earth. Rather charmingly, all of the crew's timepieces seem to have the magical ability to tell them that they've been flung into distant 3979AD. The set-up for the show fits strangely in *Apes* continuity, drawing more inspiration from Pierre Boulle's original book than other media. The *Apes* are pretty advanced; not only do they have rifles but they also have jeeps, cars and television. They even have a plane. It's worth pointing out here that it's much easier to animate a jeep than a horse. Though cartoons have an unlimited budget when it comes to things like equipment and locations, the animation for *Return to the Planet of the Apes* was in and of itself quite limited, with the characters barely moving for much of the show. Extended action scenes tended to involve generic characters doing the same thing again and again, almost as if they only had one set of animations for certain things.

Despite these limitations, *Return to the Planet of the Apes* had a well-written script and was reasonably exciting for teatime telly. Even though it was quite different from the live-action TV series and the movies, it drew upon that established world to create familiar stories. For example, when astronauts Bill and Jeff meet the primitive humans, they bump into a lady called Nova. This is

arguably the same character from *Planet of the Apes* as she's wearing astronaut dog-tags. Characters from the full range of movies also feature and interact in ways they couldn't have done in the films simply because they didn't have the right actors on set at the time. Another good example is that The Underwellers from *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* are dealt with almost from the very beginning, with Judy becoming their sort of leader/messiah figure. Remixes of canonical characters also appear; for example we meet Ron Brent, who is basically the same character of John Brent from *Beneath the Planet of the Apes*, right down to the fetching loincloth.

Episodes include the very silly *Attack from the Clouds*, which features a dragon-like creature turning up to wreak havoc, and *Terror on Ice Mountain*, which introduces Kygoor, the yeti-like god of the mountain apes. (Alas, he's only a very big statue.) *Lagoon of Fear* introduces a Loch Ness monster-style creature into the mix. As you can see, the show took pretty large liberties with the source material, and span-off in some wild directions.

The series ended in the same way as it began - as a weird mish-mash of ideas that would have worked better if the animation hadn't been so cheaply done. The last episode, *Battle of the Titans*, featured hot air balloons, WWII aircraft, giant serpents and a mysterious, world-shattering book called *A Day at the Zoo*. Maybe some day an enterprising *Apes* fan will use this obscure bit of TV trivia as inspiration and give this rich world the high quality animated treatment it deserves, but until then, *Return to the Planet of the Apes* remains a lovely bit of '70s kids-TV nostalgia.



WHERE MAN ONCE STOOD SUPREME--NOW RULE THE APES!



COMICS OF THE APES

by Ed Fortune

As far back as the 1950s, it was a widely held belief that if a comic book had a gorilla, chimp or monkey on the cover it was more likely to sell. Most ape-themed villains were created during the Silver Age of comic books, and DC felt it such a noteworthy and pernicious thing that they placed a limit on the amount of primates permitted per month. This is the main reason why the *PLANET OF THE APES* license has been fought over throughout the franchise's history; Chimp comics are seen as a guaranteed seller, even to this day, and artists all over the world have tried to turn the franchise into sequential art...

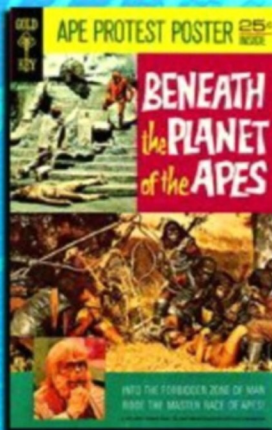
The first *Planet of the Apes* movie tie-in ever produced was in 1968, for the now defunct Japanese manga *Bessatsu Bōken Ō* (Adventure King). It was a relatively faithful adaptation of the movie and is very firmly out of print with issues in poor condition going for around £200 at auctions. Adaptations of other *Apes* movies appeared in *Weekly Shōnen Champion*, a magazine that is still very much alive (though good luck finding back issues).

The West wouldn't see a comic book version of the angry apes until the second movie. *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* was produced by Gold Key and drawn

by the legendary Alberto Giolitti. Though Giolitti is fondly remembered by some for cowboy comics such as the *Cisco Kid* and *Gunsmoke*, he is better known for his work on the early *Star Trek* comic strips, also published by Gold Key, who specialised in tie-in comic strips. Gold Key did have some original titles of their own, including *Turok*, *Son of Stone*. It's worth noting that all the rights to their back catalogue now belong to the DreamWorks Animation Studio. The most fondly remembered franchise holder was Marvel Comics. During the seventies, Marvel was churning out as many movie tie-ins as it could find and the two books that attract the most nostalgia are *Star Wars* and *Planet of the Apes*.

Marvel's monkeys were a treat to behold; *Planet of the Apes Magazine* not only featured an adaptation of each movie, it also expanded on the world itself. *Terror on the Planet of the Apes* was the tale of the evil gorilla Brutus and his ongoing quest to oppress and rule. Other strips included an Ape's history lesson called *Evolution's Nightmare* and the utterly wild *Future History Chronicles*, which featured city-sized ships on black seas.

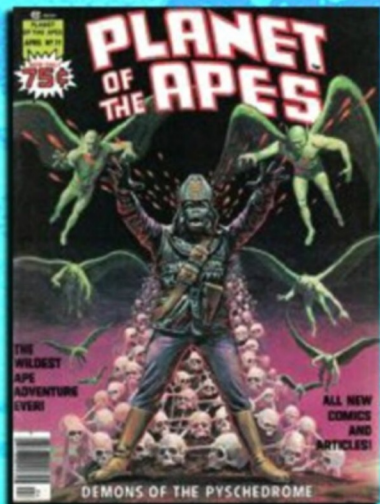
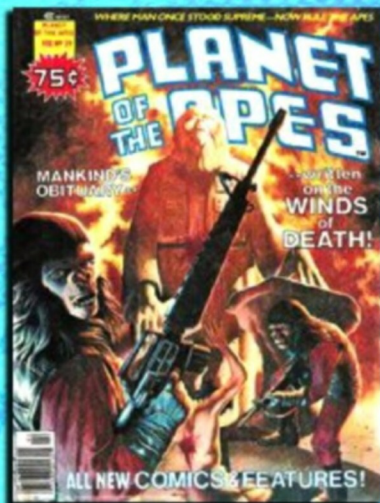
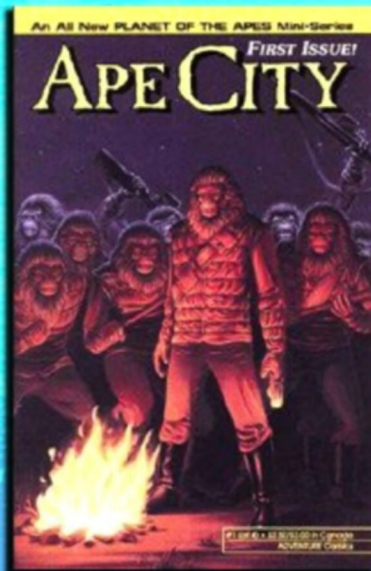
The magazine was also filled with loads of behind the scenes photos from the movies and interviews with the cast, but it sadly folded in 1977 thanks to a drop in subscriptions and a rise in licensing



fees. Genre junkies didn't have to wait long for another source of behind the scenes photos and interviews though - STARBURST launched that very same year!

Other also-rans include *Power Records*, who produced short strips to accompany their ape-based audio dramas back in 1975 and Brown Watson Books series of annuals inspired by the short-lived TV show. The Annuals actually outlived the show and were filled with confused and confusing artwork. Another TV related spin-off was the Argentinean tie-in comic book produced by Editorial Mo.Pa.Sa. They were as short-lived as the show but remain a firm favourite amongst hardcore fans, with unofficial English language translations being available on the web.

Perennial runner-up Malibu Comics also had a crack at the franchise in the early '90s. In addition to reprinting some of Marvel's books, they also produced a tie-in with their other franchise, *Alien*



Nation. Malibu produced four other mini-series, *Urchak's Folly*, *Forbidden Zone*, *Ape City* and *Blood of the Apes*. Though pretty unremarkable, they did feature a lot of gore. Dark Horse Comics, whose back catalogue is heavily reliant on popular sci-fi movies from the '60s and '70s only held the licenses for a short while. Their books tied into Tim Burton's vision of the Apes continuity and were handled by Gothic scribe Ian Edginton. After some toy tie-ins and the inevitable movie adaptation, Dark Horse galloped off to more profitable grounds.

Another attempt at entering the simian hall of fame was 2005's *Revolution on the Planet of the Apes*, produced by Canadian publisher Mr Comics. It was a labour of love by comic book creator Ty Templeton, but no one bought it and the rights were eventually picked up by Boom! Studios in 2011.

Boom! currently control the license and have cleverly evaded the problem of a difficult and entrenched continuity by setting their version a good length of time before the original 1968 movie. The result is a book heavily informed by the comics of the past. We have Marvel's strange pulpy vision, Mr Comic's earnest exploration of the franchise's themes and Malibu's buckets of gore. Boom! have issued four mini-series and a number of specials so far. They detail the foundation of Apes society (including the rise of the Moses-like Lawgiver) and the collapse (and enslavement) of mankind. Dark and heavy with meaning, it's the treatment the franchise has waited over forty years for. It's also selling very well, partially because people will still buy any comic book with a monkey on the cover.

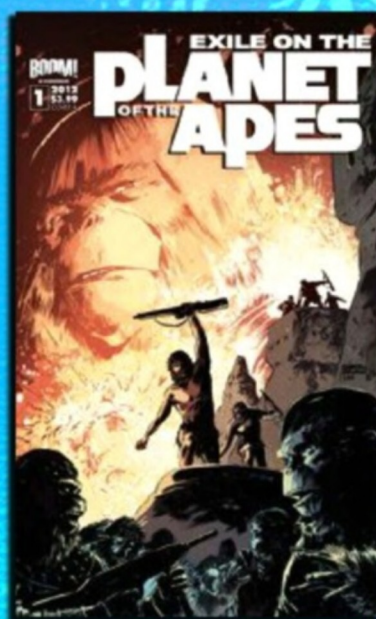
APESLAYER OF MARS



One of the unique treats that British *Planet of The Apes* fans got to enjoy during the seventies was *Apeslayer*, the tale of a human rebel who fought against the Ape oppression. The UK preferred its comic books to be weekly rather than monthly and even though the American strips were carefully chopped and edited it still meant that the British version was going to run out of material unless something special was added. *Apeslayer* was brought in to pad out Marvel UK's *Planet of the Apes Magazine*.

All was not what it seemed however; for a post-apocalyptic world ruled by super intelligent apes the level of technology was much greater than what we'd seen in the movies. The apes had huge TV screens, weird architecture and giant tripod-like death machines. This is because the strips were originally known as *Killraven*, a *War of the Worlds* themed tale about one very muscular, semi-naked man who punched aliens for a living. Marvel UK simply redrew the heads of the Martians so they resembled chimps instead. They adjusted some of the dialogue, adding extra exposition to explain the death machines and heat rays. They also changed Killraven's hair colour and did their best to shoe-horn it in to the continuity.

Ultimately, the Marvel UK version of *Planet of the Apes* suffered the same fate every British Action Comic did; it got merged with another comic book, in this case *Dracula Lives*. Eventually both *Dracula* and the Apes went into another book - *The Mighty World of Marvel*. It didn't last that long, but it did have both gun-wielding Gorillas and the Incredible Hulk on the cover; who could ask for more!



A MONKEY BUSINESS

by Jack Bottomley

STARBURST escapes from captivity to present you with a guide to some of the most distinctive PLANET OF THE APES merchandise in existence!

There are film sagas that lend themselves to mass merchandising, heck, there isn't many kids out there who haven't wanted to be swing lightsabers like a Jedi, soar in glorified pyjamas like Superman or shoot webs like Spider-Man (Aqua-Man however, is a different story). Although one series that does not necessarily scream "make produce" is the *Planet of the Apes*. This sci-fi series comes with big themes and big surprises, but the biggest is how much monkey business the films have caused in the world of retail! It really is amazing how much merchandise ape-occupied Earth offers, from the inexplicable to the useful, to some real hair-brained products. From inflatable Dr. Zaius' to ape helicopters, Sideshow's impressive figures to Hasbro's excessively hairy ones, we saw it all in our search to bring you the best examples out there...



PLANET OF THE APES RING TOSS GAME (1974)

When a bottle isn't good enough to toss a ring round, it seems an ape is the next logical step. Or at least that's what Pressman Toy Company seems to think with this unusual choice for a *Planet of the Apes* game. Complete with a "giant" standing figure (well, a few inches high) and 6 rings, this attractive nonsense is one of the more level-headed products out there and genuinely fun. Which gives you some indication of just how irrational some other entries on this list are going to be!

BOOM-A-RANGUTANG (1974)

Cinematic stereotyping is a terrible thing but in all fairness products like this don't help. These weird boomerangs have very little to actually do with the movies themselves, beyond the point it's presented as a banana and apes love bananas, although we can't recollect any of the characters chucking them at Charlton Heston. But maybe that's just us. The flimsy Boom-a-rangutang is one of those novelty items that you just know is a load of monkey dung but at the same time has that inexplicable "I want it" quality.

PELLET-SHOOTING WALKIE-TALKIE (1974)

Back when popping a cap in someone's ass was only an accidental use of your pellet-shooting walkie-talkie... OK, maybe not. When communications go south, indulge your inner primate by tossing crap at your mate. We can only assume that was the mind-set that went into this nonsensical toy made by Larami, which only really linked to the franchise in any sense thanks to the package art that depicted Brent and Nova from

Beneath the Planet of the Apes. Not sure if encouraging kids to shoot their mates for not answering them is the best way to go though; hell, in these days of Facebook messages being ignored, it would be chaos: "Are you alright, mate? Answer me! Argh! Eat my pellets!"

DON POST MASKS (1975)

There are some odd items here but this one is the most logical piece of merchandise listed and one of the best. To quote Alan Partridge, "monkey hats and tat" have been a token of childhood as long as those crappy bow and arrows from fairs that break on the first go. However, these Don Post masks were far from the thin plastic facemasks that were knocked together, they were the real deal. Made by Don Post Studios (started by legendary mask maker Don Post, "the godfather of Halloween") in the '70s, these quality masks were a fantastic way to indulge your inner primate. Hairy and great to look at, they are often considered among the best of the items to evolve from the films. In fact, some are sold over the internet to this day, albeit prices have changed massively!

PLANET OF THE APES PLAY FEET (1974)

Released by Commonwealth, these glorified foot covers are another walk on the wild side of movie merchandise. We're not really sure where the idea for these play feet came from, but one can only look at them and think... eh? After all, what kid would want to worry about how their feet looked while running around in a monkey mask in the garden?

ATTAR COOKIE JAR (2001)

Not only a fantastic piece of rhyming but also perhaps the only decent thing (Rick Baker's make up and Danny Elfman's score aside) to emerge from Tim Burton's ill-advised knuckle-dragging 2001 remake. Why keep your cookies in a boring old tin or that stupid packaging when you can have the 12" armoured-up Attar (played by the late Michael Clarke Duncan in the film) guarding them in your kitchen. Ok, so it is not exactly fabulous but at least it is not Ape-raham Lincoln. *face palm*

MONKEY SHINES FLASHLIGHT (1974)

Though the title reads like a sentence, this flashlight shows that a) People really will buy anything if you had the brand name on it, and b) Even apes need a helping hand in the dark. So what if it's just Larami slapping Cornelius on a cheap light, it is still an unavoidably batty piece of kit for the little and large ape lovers out there.

SKY DIVING PARACHUTIST (1974)

Azrak Hamway International (AHI) certainly had their share of weird Apes rack toys in the market, from the ape water pistol to the dodgily titled Little Walkers (which at first glance looked like it said something else). However the Sky Diving Parachutist was one of the most bizarre. The toy came in two versions, one being Galen and the other





being (a slightly more ginger) Dr. Zaius in a jumpsuit, and neither made much sense as official merchandise. Still, as a kid dropping it from the upstairs window, it hardly mattered. In fact nowadays they're fairly collectable.

INTER-PLANETARY APE PHONES (1974)

Pellet shooting Ape walkie-talkies? Pfft. These are Ape Phones, and not just any old phones at that – these are inter-planetary ones! (Although, to our knowledge, there is no evidence that they actually worked as a communicator between worlds.) What do they have to do with *Planet of the Apes* you ask? Bugger all of course, but this glorified spin on the can-on-a-string from Larami, is among the most interesting toys out there and further proof that the company most likely spent the entirety of 1974 drawing mind maps and making official merchandise out of whatever came up in amidst all the monkey chatter at the office.

PLANET OF THE APES SILLY SOAP (1974)

This product is like something right out of *Flubber* – bendy *Planet of the Apes* soap! The fact the “damned dirty apes” use soap proves that George Taylor was being very unfair with his insult. The whole idea of this crazy little thing is that you can mould it into various shapes and it's the “world's only soft soap”. You can play with it, wash with it (not sure why that is such a novelty for soap) and not worry about dying, as it is non-toxic (phew). This Hot Items product sure demands attention in terms of creativity and is among the more innovative product with old Zaius' hairy mug on it.

GORILLA GLASSES (1974)

Deceptively titled, this Larami (them again) item is not a reading aid for the aging primate warrior but a pair of licensed binoculars. When a film has amassed a big enough audience to flog binoculars, then you can clearly see why so many weird and wonderful products made it into the market. 1974 was really the fever pitch year for *Planet of the Apes* products that swarmed the market and in many ways pre-dated how *Star Wars* (only 3 years later) would turn merchandise into an intrinsic part of the film process.

BIKE SAFETY FLAGS (1974)

This will be a nostalgia trip for many readers; you could literally fly the flag for the species with these nifty bike safety flags decorated by the handsomely hairy features of the characters. These are actually quite a stylish way to chimp your ride (sorry), and with 4 flags available you could choose from General Aldo, Galen, Zira and Dr. Zaius (he's a pretty big deal). Mind you if a war between man and monkey did eventually break out, you could be prosecuted as a traitor flying this flag, so think on.

PERISCOPE (1967)

You can rise above the planet of the apes with this Winner produced,

19-inch-long periscope, decked out with characters from the films. This is an earlier item in the apesverse and just as loosely based on the actual films (ok, so loosely is even pushing it) as you'd expect – we don't recall Dr. Zira relying on her periscope in times of need! However, this is yet another crazy, fully licensed item that hit shelves promoting the movies. This periscope may not be quite as bizarre as some on this list but it showcases the unorthodox nature of this series' memorabilia.

BOTTLE MODELS (1975)

Addar's Super Scene series were self-assembly models, whereby the image/scene was given dimension within a bottle. One of the most famous was the *Jaws* Super Scene but *Planet of the Apes* also got in on the action with 3 different models in the series: The Jail Wagon, Cornfield Round-up and Tree House. These bottle models today are quite sought after and even back then were among the better ideas for a product. Well if you can have a ship in a bottle why not an ape tree house?

PLANET OF THE APES SUNGLASSES HAT (1975)

It doesn't get more vintage than this garish giggle, which is far from a funky monkey! This is a real goofy looking thing that the council of ape city would have undoubtedly outlawed; a piece of headwear that takes the top banana as the oddest of all merchandise out there, not least because its yellow colour scheme makes out that the *Planet of the Apes* universe at some point had intercourse with *The Simpsons*. That said, would you rather the sun blind you, or have a cool head and be able to see with this novelty headwear? Actually give us a moment to weigh up the pros and cons...

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Out of all the genre franchises it has to be said that *Planet of the Apes* merch was really out there. Out of the myriad of outlandish stuff still available via eBay, the *Planet of the Apes* belt buckles were my personal fave. A piece of collectable memorabilia so awesome that whilst admittedly screaming “nerd” and attracting the attentions of the school bully, it was more than happy to oblige when dispensing a monkey slapdown. Forget pepper spray, wandering round the playground with a very meaty, well balanced apes buckle, and you were sorted. Sadly the headmaster did not have to call in CSI when confronted with a spate of semi-conscious youths all sporting Roddy McDowall imprints on their foreheads!

Jordan M. Royce



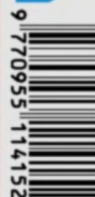
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