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The sequels you didn't see—and why!



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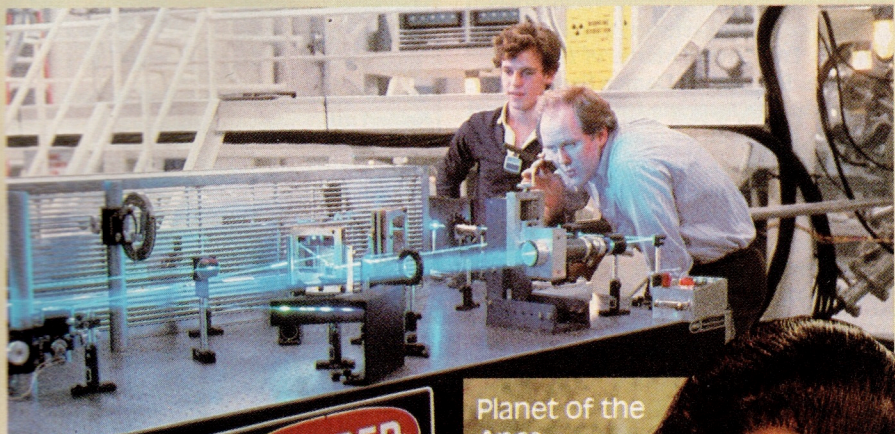
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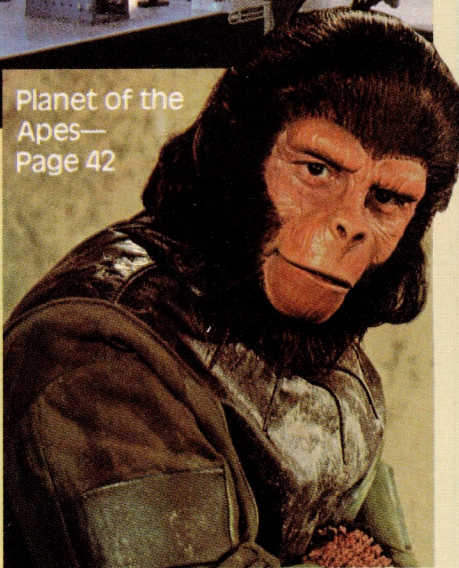


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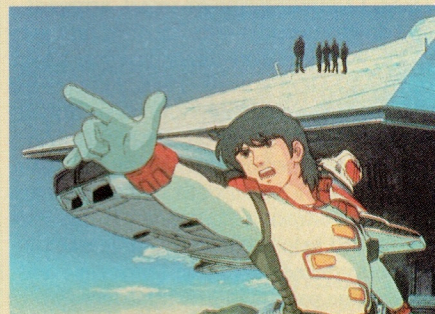
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By JOE RUSSO & LARRY LANDSMAN with EDWARD GROSS

PLANET of the APES Revisited

Producer Arthur P. Jacobs and the sequel makers meet in the world of Hollywood past to lead Charlton Heston, James Franciscus and Kim Hunter to the nightmare future "Beneath the Planet of the Apes."



There is a climactic scene in Cecil B. DeMille's 1956 version of *The Ten Commandments* in which Moses (Charlton Heston) raises his Holy Staff and parts the Red Sea. It was a moment in motion picture history which represented a miracle in both biblical *and* cinematic terms (CINEMAGIC #31-2), yet less than a decade later, Heston would find himself and producer Arthur P. Jacobs in a situation which would make the earlier feat seem like child's play.

Convincing 20th Century Fox to allow Heston and Jacobs to adapt French author Pierre Boulle's *Monkey Planet* to the screen as *Planet of the Apes* was nothing short of a miracle. It was believed in all corporate corners that a film involving a planet of intelligent simians would not only be impossible to convey realistically, but would get laughed out of theaters as well. Richard Zanuck, head of 20th Century Fox during the 1960s (STARLOG #96), and the Fox Board of Directors all felt that any such *Apes* picture was doomed to failure, no matter how sincere the direction or performances.

During these struggles, Jacobs, Heston and director Franklin J. Schaffner filmed a five-minute makeup test at the Fox Ranch, which consisted of a scene between Heston as the astronaut Taylor and Edward G. Robinson as the talking ape of science, Dr. Zaius, with dialogue by Rod Serling, who had written the screenplay's first draft.

While the test proved that the makeup could be accepted on a realistic level, it was still believed that a \$5 million science-fiction film

Originally, the sequel—filled with gorillas, chimps and mutants—was to be titled *Planet of the Apes Revisited*.

ARTHUR P. JACOBS Production

BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES

Starring
JAMES
FRANCISCUS
KIM
HUNTER
MAURICE
EVANS
LINDA
HARRISON
Co-Starring
PAUL RICHARDS
VICTOR BUONO
JAMES GREGORY
JEFF COREY
NATALIE TRUNDY
THOMAS GOMEZ
and
CHARLTON
HESTON as Taylor

G ALL AGES ADMITTED
General Audiences
-25-

Directed by TED POST • Screenplay by PAUL DEHN • Story by PAUL DEHN and MORT ABRAHAMS • Based on Characters Created by PIERRE BOULLE • Music by LEONARD ROSENMAN • PANAVISION® COLOR by DELUXE®

was too risky a gamble. Then, Fox released the special FX-laden *Fantastic Voyage*, which opened to fantastic box-office grosses.

Mort Abrahams, who had joined up with Jacobs several years earlier on *Dr. Doolittle* and served as associate producer of the first two *Apes* pictures, explains that he, Jacobs and Zanuck were in a meeting discussing the possibility of *Planet* and the success of *Fantastic Voyage* as proof that SF could be a viable force at the box office. "Dick Zanuck said, 'OK, I'll tell you what. If you can bring the picture in for \$5 million, I'll try to get it through the board,'" explains Abrahams. "Dick went to New York and stuck his neck out, and convinced them. He came back and said, 'OK, go.'"

The subsequent success of *Planet of the Apes* was significant for two very important reasons. First, it proved that moviegoers were interested in SF films which didn't just have aliens invasions or rampaging monsters. Secondly, it helped open up a new avenue of expression in SF films, allowing more extensive exploration of relevant themes such as the consistent threat of nuclear war, the nature of man himself and the direction in which humanity is headed as a species.

When Charlton Heston collapsed before the war-shattered remains of the Statue of Liberty and realized that this bizarre planet of the apes was actually *Earth*, audiences were stunned. This seemed the ultimate statement the film could make, with nothing more needing to be said.

Therefore, it isn't surprising that there was no serious thought about a sequel until well after the film's launch. It was almost as though a follow-up film came about solely due to an off-the-cuff remark.



The Big Apple of *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* mostly consisted of recognizable landmarks and as associate producer Mort Abrahams notes, "shots of New York with buildings on their sides."

With *Planet of the Apes* breaking box-office records across the country, Zanuck, Abrahams and Jacobs assembled in Zanuck's Fox office for a "catch-all" meeting.

"*Planet* had been doing extremely well," recalls Abrahams, "and we were talking, patting ourselves on the back, and giving Dick credit for putting his neck on the line and so forth. Arthur, Stan Hough [an executive production manager at Fox] and I left Dick's office and walked downstairs. As we were walking across the lot, Stan said, 'Why don't you do a sequel?' And I said, 'You've got to be kidding—how?' He said, 'You think about it.' Later, I got a flash of an idea and went into Arthur's office and said, 'Listen, I got this

crazy idea about how to do a sequel. . . ."

Seemingly that's all it took. Like the opening of Pandora's box, Hough's suggestion unleashed a veritable flood of possible follow-ups, with ideas most notably coming from Rod Serling and Pierre Boule. Apparently, it was a project that everybody wanted

JOE RUSSO is a New Jersey-based writer. LARRY LANDSMAN, a New York writer, works for Bobby Zarem Public Relations. EDWARD GROSS, frequent STARLOG contributor, profiled Joseph Stefano in issue #104. This is an excerpt from their work in progress, a volume exploring the entire Apes saga titled *Planet of the Apes Revisited*.

ALL APES PHOTOS: COURTESY THE ARTHUR P. JACOBS ARCHIVES



The men who shepherded Apes onto celluloid: Fox mogul Richard Zanuck (left) and producer Arthur P. Jacobs.

to be involved in, yet coming up with a viable script for the first of what would be four sequels turned out to be the series' most arduous task.

Simian Scripting

It was Serling who submitted the first written thought on the sequel, proposing to Jacobs and Abrahams that Taylor (Heston) and Nova (Linda Harrison) take off to the dark, unexplored part of the planet. Eventually, they would discover the remnants of a city and Taylor would realize that he is man's only hope for the future. Half the film would concern Taylor's battle with the apes who follow him. When the apes have him cornered, all hope looks lost, but a second spacecraft containing (human) astronauts from the past arrives and stops them. The proposed film would have ended with Taylor having the opportunity to return to his own time, but electing to stay behind in order to bring humanity back to the planet of the apes.

In April 1968, after discussions with Jacobs, Abrahams wrote back saying that he thought Serling's treatment was missing the

original's visual shock, as well as a climactic shock like the first film's shot of the Statue of Liberty. He felt that the film must begin with such shocking equivalents and build the story around them. Serling responded over the next month with two alternative ideas. In the first, Taylor and Nova discover another ship intact and travel either forward or backwards in time to a new, bizarre but unrelated adventure. In Serling's opinion, this would open up "a whole raft of possibilities." The second idea had Taylor once again finding a spacecraft, eluding the apes for most of the film and taking off with a handful of intelligent humans. Together, they discover another civilized planet and land, oblivious to the fact that it is populated by apes (an idea similar to the climax of Boulle's original novel).

Both of Serling's scenarios were rejected, and Boulle was contacted for a treatment and script. The result was *Planet of the Men*, a screenplay which picks up immediately where the original left off and follows Taylor and Nova as they re-educate mankind to reclaim Earth, while reducing the apes to their primitive states. In fact, the script ended in a circus where the nearly inarticulate Dr. Zaius is little more than a trained ape. Again, this script was rejected, mostly due to its "uncinematic" approach.

"Finally," Abrahams concedes, "having thought about it for several weeks, I abandoned the idea of trying to top the Statue of Liberty shot. I told Arthur, 'Look, let's not do a film for the final shot, which we're trying to do in topping the first picture's fantastic experience. Let's just do a picture, but we have to make it visually more exciting by involving ourselves with either mechanical or film effects.' So, we started with that premise. Then, I got the idea of going beyond apes to a race of mutant humans who could create reality out of their own mental images—earthquakes, rock falls and all that sort of thing—which gave us the opportunity for visual effects on the screen. We worked backwards, building the story around the visual

gimmicks."

While working in England on *The Chairman* for APJAC Productions, Abrahams met with poet-turned screenwriter Paul Dehn, who had co-written *Goldfinger*, one of the most popular James Bond films. After some discussion, Dehn agreed to write a treatment and, if deemed necessary, a screenplay.

"Having read his poetry," Abrahams says, "I wondered if he would be interested. His imagery indicated such a fertile imagination that I thought his would not be the standard screenwriter's approach."

Titled *Planet of the Apes Revisited*, Dehn's treatment, which was developed with Abrahams, begins with the original's final moments. This time, Taylor and Nova ride into the Forbidden Zone, where they encounter a race of mutants; human beings who, having survived the nuclear war, migrated to underground fortresses and, due to radiation fallout, eventually metamorphosed into telepathic beings who worship the atomic bomb as God. Meanwhile, the gorilla army from Ape City marches into the Zone with the sole intent of exterminating all humans and claiming the land as their own.

"We were looking for a setting that would be at once recognizable to the audience and yet take on a different form," explains Abrahams. "Now, we had already destroyed New York in the first one, so we had to decide if we wanted to do shots of New York with buildings on their sides. We decided to go underground instead, and keep the whole atmosphere underground in contrast to the first picture which was all above ground. I don't know where the specific idea of the subway came in, but it all came about due to our desire to create a very visual picture."

"The first film depended upon the unusual story and the unusual characters. Presumably, most of the audience for the second picture would have seen the first, therefore you couldn't do scenes like the sudden disclosure of apes on horseback and expect the same reaction. We were looking for unusual visuals, not the repetition of anything in picture one."

Dehn's treatment climaxes with both the apes army and mutants perishing in an underground nuclear explosion, while Taylor and Nova escape. They meet with their two chimpanzee allies, Cornelius and Zira, and return to Ape City to establish a new order. There is an optimistic ending in which all captive humans are freed with a new era dawning between man and ape, and, eventually, the birth of a half-human, half-ape child.

The latter idea was given serious consideration, even to the point of the development of preliminary makeup, but was eventually discarded due to the controversy expected to follow the implied mating of a human and ape, and the fear that such depiction would cost the film its G rating.

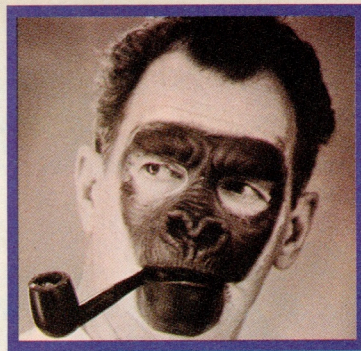
Monkey Business

With Dehn's treatment fairly well-received, *Apes Revisited* was finally on the road to production. Don Medford, a veteran of *Twilight Zone*, *The FBI* and many other TV

James Franciscus, director Ted Post and Natalie Trundy relax *Beneath the Planet of the Apes*. It's the wrap party.



Being a gorilla was something that actor James Gregory (inset) was "anxious" to do. As General Ursus, he led the ape militia.



series stints, was chosen as director, Dehn would script and hopes were strong that the cameras would soon begin rolling. But again, the bottom fell out of the project when Charlton Heston, who had played the pivotal role of Taylor in the original film, flatly refused to appear in the sequel.

"I didn't think the idea of doing a sequel was a good one," Heston says emphatically. "The *only* story you could tell had been told in *Planet of the Apes*. Anything further would just be adventures among the monkeys. From a studio standpoint, I understand what they did. But as an actor, there simply wasn't anything to play."

To make matters worse, Medford left the project due to "creative differences." Director Ted Post was brought in as a replacement, having just earned critical acclaim with Clint Eastwood's *Hang 'em High*, but he was ready to resign as well if Heston wouldn't make an appearance in the film.

"Heston didn't like the story and I agreed with him," says Post, "and I didn't want to do the picture without him because I didn't want the audience to think we would be giving them less. I wanted to have him there because it would legitimize the sequel."

"Dick Zanuck then got into the act," Abrahams continues the story, "and asked

Chuck to come see him personally." It was in this meeting that Zanuck reminded the actor that he was the one who had sanctioned *Planet* in the first place.

"I recognized that," says Heston, "and I said, 'Look, I'm very grateful to you because you were the *only* studio head who recognized what the piece could be. I understand

you owe your stockholders something. I'll tell you what. What if I'm in it and you kill me in the first scene?' And he said, 'That's OK. We can work out some kind of plot, but you gotta be in it or we can't get *started*.'"

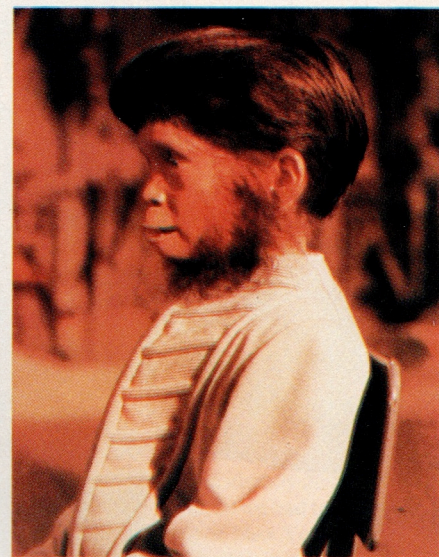
This story point was agreeable to all, though things were amended slightly in that Taylor would disappear at the film's begin-

John Chambers (left) and Dan Streipeke worked their makeup magic to create the apes and mutants.





"We had already destroyed New York in the first one," observes associate producer Mort Abrahams. What to do for an encore? Why not send Brent (Franciscus) and Nova (Linda Harrison) underground?



Experimental makeup for the half-human, half-ape child which was later eliminated from the screenplay.

ning and show up again at the climax.

Matters were made easier with Heston's concession, but now Dehn had to rewrite the script to accommodate the new situation. To this end, he developed a scenario in which a second astronaut, John Brent, lands on the planet after following Taylor's trajectory. Once Taylor vanishes into the Forbidden Zone, it's Brent who encounters Nova and the mutant humans there.

First draft of the screenplay in hand, with Dehn working on the second draft, Jacobs and Abrahams began casting the film, realizing that this time, it wouldn't be a "name" actor who would carry the film, but rather the precedent set by *Planet* itself.

Returning from the original were Heston as Taylor; Linda Harrison as Nova; Kim Hunter as the humane chimpanzee, Zira; and

Maurice Evans as the pompous Dr. Zaius. Unfortunately, Roddy McDowall (who had not yet become the series' focal point) was making his directorial debut in London on *Tam Lin* (a.k.a. *The Devil's Widow*) and was replaced by English actor David Watson as Cornelius, Zira's archeologist husband. Other newcomers included character actor James Gregory as the gorilla, General Ursus, head of the ape militia, a role which Orson Welles turned down; and James Franciscus as Brent (the lead which Burt Reynolds had rejected). In addition, cast as the mutants were Natalie Trundy, Jacobs' wife (who would appear in the subsequent three films as both a human and a chimpanzee), Victor Buono, Gregory Sierra and Thomas Gomez.

"When I read the script," says James Franciscus, "I thought that the story was fine, but the character really wasn't much of a man—in essence, he was led around by the nose saying, 'yes' and 'no.' So, I told my agent, Dick Clayton, 'I can see why Burt turned this down. The character, the way it's drawn, is no man.' I met with Mort and Arthur Jacobs and told them—based on the fact that they do some work here and there—yeah, I would be interested. So, the deal was set, though I wasn't locked in yet. Over the weekend, I did something outrageous, which I knew it was, but I *wasn't* going to let the script changes be muddled around: a line here, a line there. It needed a whole new reworking."

To this end, Franciscus and a writer friend named John Ryan, with later assistance from Ted Post, spent a weekend restructuring the Brent character, rewriting about 60 pages. Several days later, Franciscus put the script in

Abrahams' mailbox and waited for a reaction.

Abrahams was fairly irritated, telling the actor that he really had *no* right to rewrite a screenplay weeks before production began, and that neither he nor Jacobs could accept it, though he admitted that there were some good ideas which would certainly be incorporated where possible.

"Anyway," Franciscus laughs, "two days later, a revised script came in and, by heavens, there were about 54 of my 60 pages in it. In my rewrite, I turned the character from a man being chased, to a man in jeopardy—and confused, but still a man."

Post corroborates this story, saying that he and Franciscus continued to work on the script together. "What we did," he explains, "was to make suggestions or do things that would make it legitimate. I know one thing—much of it ended up on the screen. This was before shooting began, and Mort got angry with the changes and angry with me. Finally, I said, 'Listen, Mort, actors have to perform this script and sitting where you are, you don't *know* whether a scene will work.'"

Ape Acting

Franciscus' enthusiasm for the film comes through in the way he speaks, as does James Gregory's, a surprising fact considering the makeup rigors which he and approximately 1000 others had to endure.

"Actually, I was anxious to do it," says Gregory, "because I saw the first one and said, 'I could do that.' It's a good thing that I

An early mutant makeup design by Chambers and Striekpeke.



wasn't claustrophobic, though, because you felt hemmed in. I was strapped into my costume, it was like being a turtle with his shell and back on."

Kim Hunter's most powerful memories of her days on the set concern the segregation of the characters, wherein during filming breaks, the chimps sat with the chimps, gorillas with gorillas, and so on. In addition, she was struck by the human reaction to her ape makeup.

"I had people come up and poke my face, asking what it felt like," she remembers. "It was like we were creatures in the zoo, except that they could touch us. It was wild."

The budget for *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* (as it soon became known) was approximately \$3 million, much less than the \$5.8 million allotted to the original.

"It was a little unfair," explains Abrahams, "but the theory was 'yes, we would like to do a sequel. The first one was very successful, but we cannot anticipate that the second will gross as much because, traditionally, sequels go down.' That was before the later James Bond films and *Superman*. Historically *though*, that *was* true, and the budget was cut."

"We had some wonderful underwater scenes which had to be cut because they were too expensive for the modified budget," Post elaborates. "We couldn't shoot any excessive material, because the need to be within budget was extremely important. *Beneath* made money, though, much to the surprise of many people who don't believe in sequels." Indeed, the film grossed nearly as much as *Planet* and proved so popular it spawned the additional three theatrical entries and the TV series spin-off.

Despite the budgetary problems, Post notes that one of his biggest concerns throughout the production was the screenplay, which, changes aside, he found "horribly clichéd."

"The script just had so much action initially that you couldn't relate to the principals," Post says. "Action doesn't mean anything if you don't care about the characters. I spoke to [*Planet* director] Frank Schaffner, and he told me that Michael Wilson rewrote Rod Serling's original *Planet* script and that he was someone worth going after. I contacted him, he was interested and we were all set. Then, we got word that he would cost too much money, so we went back to the original writer, Paul Dehn."

"What I tried to do was to make what was given to me work. I had to apply all the techniques and principles I had ever used as a director to make this picture work. I tried to tone the film with the spirit of what it was they were attempting to do; the horror of the change that occurred in having apes control the world."

Determining his directorial approach to a script he had little faith in, Post moved to the next area which was troubling him—the makeup. Early in pre-production, it was decided that due to the large number of apes shown on screen, pullover masks would be used for all but the main characters and those

in close-up. The mutant makeup, however, was another matter.

Post met with John Chambers (STARLOG #11) and Dan Strickpeke, the duo who had developed the original's ape makeup, and studied what they had created after six months of experimentation.

"Originally, they were using horrible makeup," explains the director, "and I told them, 'I don't like these horror things you're making. A bomb of that force and impact would skin you alive. You could end up with no epidermis at all, which means you would see muscles, cells, and the nerve and blood vessels. That's in the dermis.' I remembered seeing a picture of that in *Gray's Anatomy* when I was a kid studying biology. In that book, they peeled back the epidermis and showed us what the dermis looked like. I told them I wanted that look, and they got very excited. They executed the final look of the makeup brilliantly, but the concept was mine."

Production began in February 1969, and it was then that Dick Zanuck announced that *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* would be the last episode in the series, giving Charlton Heston the idea that when he died at the film's conclusion, Taylor should take the

whole world with him by activating the Alpha-Omega nuclear weapon.

"I thought my main contribution was persuading them that the best thing for me to do would be to blow up the world," laughs Heston. "I thought, 'OK, that's going to be the end of those sequels.'"

"I *didn't* want that ending," declares Post. "I thought it was a very negative, pessimistic ending; very unhopeful. We did have other endings, but the order came down from Dick."

Thus, *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* climaxed with the destruction of everything, signifying the end of this bizarre planet of apes.

But then, while it received mixed critical notices, the film grossed nearly as much as *Planet of the Apes* and delighted audiences worldwide. Shortly thereafter, in England, writer Paul Dehn received a simple telegram:

"APES LIVE! SEQUEL REQUIRED!"

It was a short period of time before preliminary discussions began on episode three, *Secret of (eventually Escape from) the Planet of the Apes*.

Much to everyone's astonishment, the phenomenon continued. ★

"I didn't think the idea of doing a sequel was a good one," Charlton Heston remembers—but he agreed to appear if his character, Taylor, would get killed off.

