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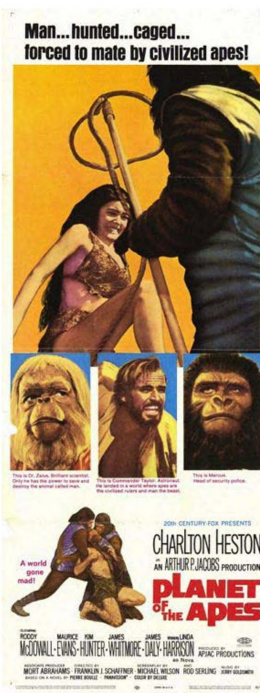


Planet of the Apes (1968) represents a highly significant moment in science fiction. Adapted from the French novel by Pierre Boulle with significant changes made to bring it to the big screen it was major success.

In the year 3978 a spaceship with a crew of four crashes on a distant planet. As the crew come out of hibernation they find one of the members has died in space and the other three set out to explore this new world. The physical environment seems much like earth but the state of the society is topsy-turvy, it is the apes who are in control and humans are treated worse than animals. As they are hunted down one of the men is shot, the other is given a lobotomy and only one survives, Taylor (Charlton Heston).

The politics on this strange world are complex with a hierarchical society, an overactive military and scientists trying to understand and help humans working against great prejudice. There is also much debate about the relationship between religion and science and this leads to a breakout during a heresy trial where Taylor escapes with a sympathetic scientist,

Iconic Image from *Planet of the Apes* (1968)



FEATURE A Century of Science Fiction Cinema

Zira. Soon Taylor makes a discovery which changes everything, it seems this world is not so different from his own; indeed it may just be a matter of time.

Planet of the Apes is saturated with significant science fiction themes as well as some truly iconic images, who can forget the Statue of Liberty buried in the sand? The primary theme is a carefully constructed criticism of the hierarchy of modern society presented under the guise of the inequalities of a distant civilisation.



Zira, *Planet of the Apes* (1968)

In addition we have sub-plots involving such themes as animal experimentation, the use of lobotomy (for the mentally ill), inter-racial relations (the relationship between Zira and Taylor in the guise of interspecies love), atomic warfare, the role of the military and so much more.

Planet of the Apes (1968) was followed by *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* (1969), *Escape from the Planet of the Apes* (1971), *Conquest of the Planet of the Apes* (1972) and *Battle for the Planet of the Apes* (1973).

There was also a *Planet of the Apes* television series in 1974 and the *Return to the Planet of the Apes* animated cartoon series, 1975. *Planet of the Apes* was given a new lease of life by Tim Burton in 2001, its success is a matter of debate.