

RETURN TO THE PLANET OF THE APES

ROGER CORMAN Interviewed

George Pal's DOC SAVAGE



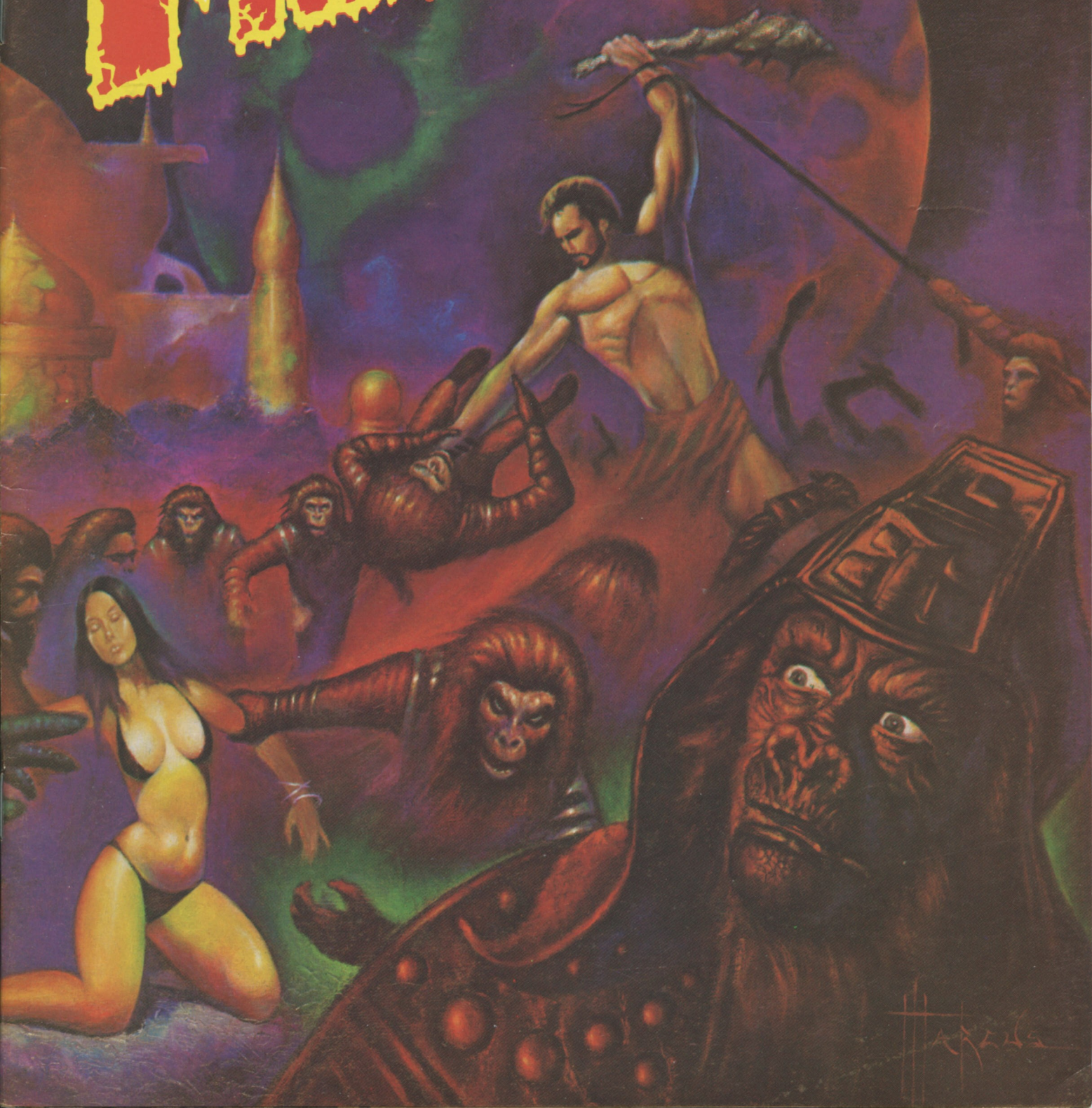
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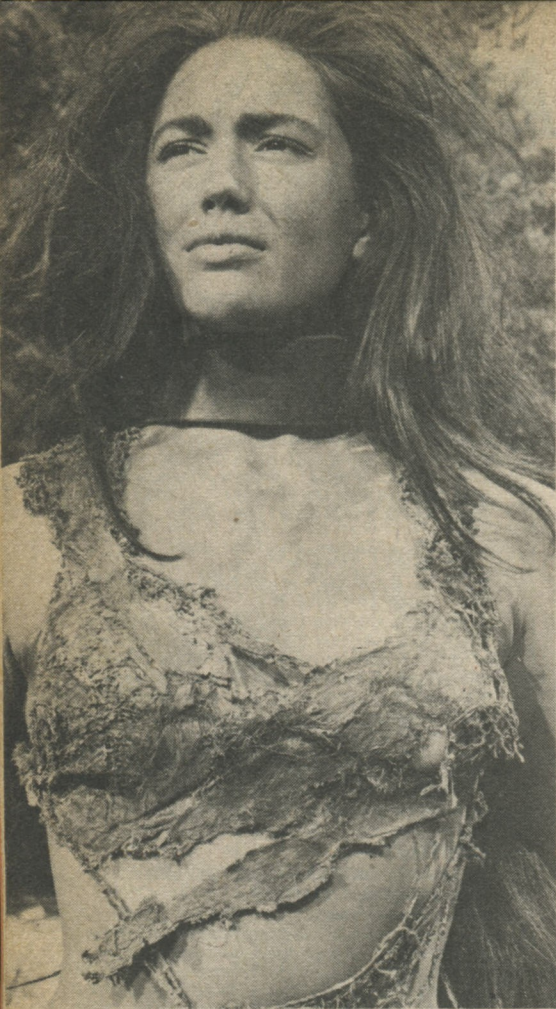
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by Paul J. Wishinsky

In 1968 20th Century-Fox shook up the world of entertainment and released an excellent sf film titled, **PLANET OF THE APES**. It was a box-office smash hit, and deservedly so. The film was invested with imagination, care and much hard work. Based on a novel by Pierre Boulle, the story was adapted for the screen by Michael Wilson and Rod Serling, and magnificently directed by Franklin J. Schaffner who evinced a fine sense for dramatic flair and intelligent action sequences. Schaffner very wisely abstained emphasizing the ape makeup —another director might have made them seem run-of-the-mill monsters; instead, he “humanized” them by making them into parodies of our own contemporary human society. Schaffner then reversed the situation: how would it be like if man were treated like an ape, and apes behaved like men? Actually, most of the credit goes to novelist Boulle, of course; yet, one may well cringe over the thought what could have happened if some other director thought it over (probably for ten seconds) and said, “Okay, gang—we’ll shoot it and make the monkeys frightening enough to make the brats buy



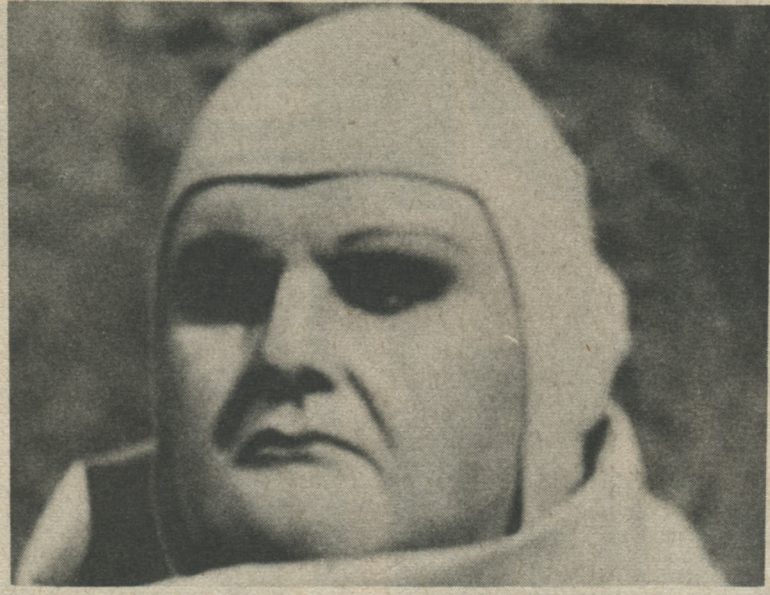
Scenes from **PLANET OF THE APES**




# APES











more soda and popcorn; and be sure we don't forget to emphasize fangs, growls and stuff."

Nobody can really blame Fox for deciding that if one APES film could make a fortune, so might another. Of course, they were right, because they went all to the up to five APES films. Supposedly **BATTLE FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES** was to be the last one of the series by going full circle and meshing in with the first one, **PLANET OF**; but it doesn't do this. In fact, it tells us nothing that we didn't know before—and adding insult to injury, it's one hell of a terrible film.

Whom to blame **BATTLE** on is now nearly irrelevant. God knows, there have been enough liberties taken with the previous sequels, but the least they could have done was make an attempt to tie everything up. Instead, **BATTLE** enlarges the gaps already created and adds a few new ones. To try to trace the entire genesis, let's start with the second film:

**BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES** was a very badly organized and unsatisfactory sequel to **PLANET**. Although sets and special effects were good (in fact, excellent in certain sequences), the story line and action ap-



Scenes from  
**BENEATH  
THE  
PLANET  
OF THE  
APES**





peared vintage hack of the Fifties and early Sixties. It all was resolved, oh so cleverly—by totally destroying the entire Earth and everyone thought that was it. But—no way.

ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE APES followed, and it brought Cornelius, Zira and Milo to the 20th century via the same time warp that Heston and Franciscus used. The Apes had found Heston's spaceship and blasted off before the cobalt bomb was detonated at the end of BENEATH. The only flaw with this was: how could any race be able to repair and pilot a complex spaceship when they were only in the horse and buggy age?

They managed, however, and splash-  
ed-down off the Los Angeles coast. The









Apes are then escorted with high honors and treated as celebrities, until— it is discovered that in their time the Apes were the dominant species *over* man. Under truth serum, Zira tells how humans were treated in her society. This in turn makes the government quite paranoid (as usual), and when Washington learns that Zira is pregnant, they are fearful that such breeding may be the beginning of the downfall of the human race.

Cornelius, however, reveals the real reason behind mankind's descent. A space virus destroyed all human pets, such as cats and dogs. To replace them, more and more humans took chimpanzees for pets; but with the passing of a few years, the chimps seemed to be more capable of understanding more complex problems. And when humans discovered this advancement, they also found a new source of cheap labor; thus, mankind once more was dealing in slavery.

The slavery lasted until one ape gained the power of speech, said "No more!" So began the Apes' revolution and the end of man's authority.

Cornelius's revelation hangs heavily over the Washington nabobs like a prophecy of doom—they decide to kill Zira's unborn baby and make the intelligent apes sterile. Cornelius and Zira hide in a small circus where she has her child whom they name Milo. But the government finds them and relentlessly hunts them down (mostly thanks to Washingtonian bureaucratic villainy, magnificently portrayed by Eric [The Forbin Project] Braeden). In the end all three are gunned down—or so it seems—: Zira had switched babies with a real circus chimp. Her intelligent child though is still alive.

ESCAPE was beyond doubt very well made and, of course, much better than BENEATH. The performances were excellent and director Don Taylor weaved a study of mistrust, paranoia and taut drama. Paul Dehn's story also held together rather well (he had scripted BENEATH with the help of Mort Abrahams). The only fault was that in both PLANET and BENEATH, no one, except Dr. Zaius (Maurice Evans) gave any indication of knowing about the history of the planet of the apes, and now we are told that there was more than an atomic war which devastated











Scenes from CONQUEST OF THE PLANET OF THE APES



# CONQUEST OF THE PLANET OF THE APES



the planet and resulted in a reversal of evolutionary roles. Perhaps before Dr. Zaius left with General Ursus to explore the Forbidden Zone, he told Cornelius and Zira the truth which, until then, only he had known as Minister of Science. This could have been the real reason that Cornelius and Zira took off in Heston's ship, to warn mankind and, instead, are persecuted by the people they were trying to save.

Baby Milo grows to maturity under the guidance of the circus owner Armando (Ricardo Montalban), and is brought to the city in CONQUEST OF THE PLANET OF THE APES. The year is 1990, and everything that Cornelius foretold has come true. A virus has destroyed all of mankind's pets and apes are now in slavery.

Armando now calls the chimp Caesar to prevent anyone from discovering that he is the son of the intelligent apes who appeared in 1970. Caesar has never been to the city, and when he witnesses some of man's cruelty to their

simian slaves, he shouts, "Lousy human bastards!" Armando tries to assume the blame for the remark and manages to escape when the ape being beaten creates a distraction. He hides Caesar and tells him that he will turn himself over to the police to keep them from guessing Caesar's secret. He instructs Caesar to hide himself among a shipment of apes being brought in from Africa if he does not return by nightfall.

Armando never returns, but before he can break under interrogation, he hurls himself through a window and falls to his death. Meanwhile, Caesar has worked himself up in the ranking of slaves and is working as a file clerk at the Command Post where he learns of Armando's death. Solemnly, he vows revenge for both his race and his only friend.

Somehow, Caesar is able to communicate perfectly with the other apes.

After all, the simians have been conditioned to understand orders and obey. Just the appearance of Caesar is reason

## Governor Seized In Revolt Of The Apes!

### APE MENACE

Entrapped governor dragged to guard house by apes in revolt

enough for apes to abandon their tasks and create havoc. The rebel apes group together and establish a secret base of operations where they plan and bring weapons stolen from their human ex-masters.

The revolution, fought at a giant shopping mall, is hard and bloody. At the climax, Caesar warns that more and more revolts will occur until, out of fear of extinction, mankind will destroy Earth rather than surrender the planet to the apes.

The series deserved a better finale than BATTLE FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES which introduced a number of contradictions: In BATTLE we see apes and humans living together in peace; in PLANET apes hunted humans and humans could not speak. In BATTLE the apes fight an invasion by the underground residents left in the city; in BENEATH the apes have idea





Scenes from BATTLE OF THE PLANET OF THE APES

that anyone still lives in the city. No one knew of the history of the apes with a few exceptions. In **BATTLE** Caesar's story and philosophies are taught in school. The film is filled with gaps and questions. How did Caesar and his followers survive the atomic holocaust? Did the humans launch the bombs...or did someone else...and why? When and how did humans lose the power of speech? When was the past of the planet buried and kept secret? Perhaps the **APES** tv series will answer some of these questions.

— Paul J. Wishinsky



END





# RETURN TO THE PLANET OF THE APES

Starting this September on CBS-TV

Starring: RODDY McDOWALL



You wouldn't believe it to look at him, but it's a fact—Roddy McDowall's screen career spans more than three decades. He spent part of his youth as co-star to a dog (LASSIE) and a horse (in MY FRIEND FLICKA) and now, he's managed to keep his acting career in full stardom by playing an ape.

Although he's never lacked work, it is ironic that after more than 30 years in the acting field, he has generated his greatest success playing an ape. The characterization has now led him into the starring role as "head ape" in PLANET OF THE APES' new tv series, which will start this September on CBS, Friday nights (8 to 9); it will be entirely based, of course, upon the enormously successful APES series; Roddy appeared in four of the five films.

"I think Lassie and Flicker would be proud of me," Roddy joked.

Though he's 45 years old, he still retains that youthful look that kept him in juvenile roles until his mid-thirties. He played a 17-year-old high school senior in *Lord Luv A Duck* when he was 32-years-old. In more recent years—before the APES took over—Roddy diversified and went into stage work and assumed many heavy film roles to shed the juvenile image. The switch proved a wise move because it gave him a chance to spread his talents across wider areas. He won a Tony award for his Broadway performance in "The Fighting Cock" and an Emmy for "American Heritage." And he won important critical acclaim as the star of THE LEG-  
END OF HELL HOUSE (see full story in CoF no. 22).

Roddy jokes about the Emmy because of an incident during the live telecast:

"I won the Emmy for losing my hair. I wore a wig in the show and Arthur Kennedy had to grab me by the head. As he did, I could feel the wig loosening. I had to clamp my hands over Kennedy's hands [Roddy demonstrated] and didn't let go until it was time for him to remove his hands."









It seems that having gone through the ordeal of 3½ hours of daily makeup every time he made an APES film, the thought of facing it again would turn him off. But, Roddy doesn't seem a bit fazed by it.

There's an irony there, too. He thinks his greatest performances have come off in the APES films—yet, because of the heavy makeup, he's virtually anonymous.

"Sure it's true—you lose all identity making these films," says Roddy. "I never met Claude Akins until after the last film. Then, I went to a party and recognized his eyes."

After the success of *PLANET OF THE APES*, the sequel that followed,

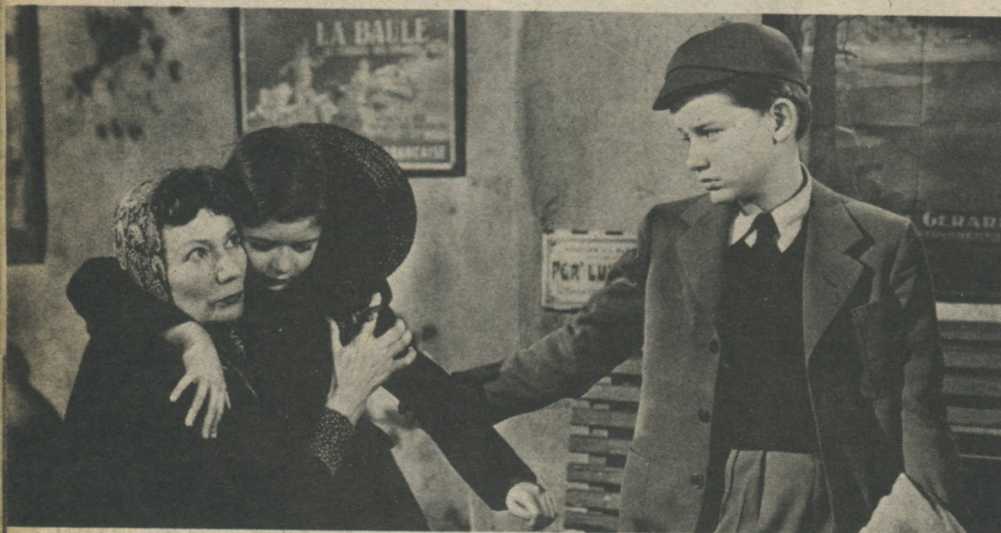
Herbert Hirschmann, producer of the CBS APES series, hopes the show often have some bearing on social relevancy; but so have all other tv producers said in the past. Hirschmann, though, acknowledges that the TV version will be mostly action-drama. And, unlike the films, humans will be articulate in the tube version. Whereas they were treated almost like animals in the original series, on TV they will appear in a state of semi-feudal bondage and as lowly menials or slaves.

Roddy McDowall is also very fascinated by the public's enthusiasm for the APES and explained it by stating, "It's sort of simple—it's the turning of nearly everything upside down that has appealed to so many."

Even without all costs for fantastic sets and special effects, the APES tv series will be expensive, running about \$225,000 per episode. That's \$40,000 more than what the average hour-long program costs these days.

Even if writing and production values are as good as in the original film versions, 26 to 32 shows a season will not bring about a drought in imagination—though each segment will be a complete adventure, in a sense it will be like a continuing serial, and each week will be linked up with a preceding week and the one that follows. The program's producers assure us that it will be enormously entertaining even if one misses a show here and there, but that it'll be even more fun catching them all.

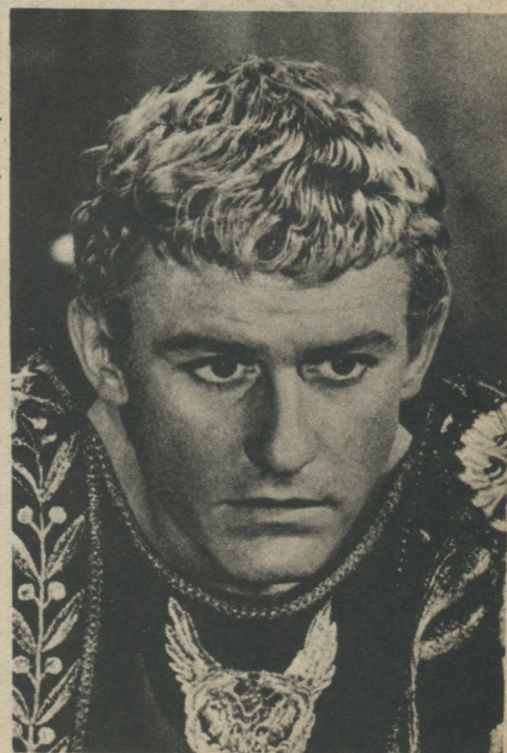
— Edna Bennington



*BENEATH THE PLANET*, did almost as well, followed by three more. In two of them, Roddy played Cornelius the archaeologist, but couldn't make the third film because of a prior commitment; he returned for the last two, playing the famous baby "chimp" who grew up and tried taking over the world. He considers the role—especially that in the fourth film—the "Best I ever played in my life."

When CBS-TV ran two of the APES flicks last year, the rating proved fantastic. As the ratings showed, the competition on other channels was all but annihilated. It became apparent then that the CBS network *had* to put it into a series.

Roddy's tv role will be an extension of the one he liked so much in the films: the head ape. His name will be Galen, who will be the young sophisticated son of an intellectual ape. Roddy or, rather, Galen will then emerge as an ape radical who becomes a renegade among his own people. Galen is considered a maverick because he believes there was an "early" *man* culture before the dawn of *apekind*.



Top: one of Roddy's favorite shots—and he should know since photography has been his second profession. Middle: in *THE PIED PIPER* (one of 1942's big hits). Above: in *THE LONGEST DAY* (1963). Right: as Caesar Augustus in *CLEOPATRA* (1962-63). Opposite page: top and middle: in *TWILIGHT ZONE*'S "People Are Alike All Over" (July, 1962). Bottom: in *THE LEGEND OF HELL HOUSE* (1973).

Extreme right (top to bottom): Roddy (left) as Malcolm and Dan O'Herlihy as the avenging Macduff in the internationally acclaimed classic, *MACBETH* (1948), directed by and starring Orson Welles in the title role.



