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**THE PLANET
OF THE APES**

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Planet Of The Apes

ARTHUR P. Jacobs, the producer of the incredibly successful "Planet of the Apes" films, was told that audiences would never be able to relate to a civilisation of thinking, talking simians, when he purchased the rights to Pierre Boulle's satirical novel. The advice of the doubters was proved dead wrong when the first of the series proved such a winner that it spawned four more feature films, and the current TV series, all raking in upwards of £50 million in total profits, so far.

There have been several instances of traffic-stopping attendance at cinemas screening mammoth programmes of all five "Apes" sagas. Jacobs died suddenly last year in the midst of work on the TV series, but Boulle's characters seem to have become part of media mythology, destined to become historically important examples of fantasy cinema. In this article, we'll provide brief synopses of all the "Apes" films for the enlightenment of fans who may actually have *missed* an episode

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or two along the line. This background material should provide you with a good foundation for best enjoyment of the television serial. Pay attention now, things are going to get a little involved...



PLANET OF THE APES (1968)

A group of astronauts crash on a strange planet. They have been in suspended animation for a long voyage, and one of the party has died and been mummified, as a result of mechanical malfunction. The three survivors, led by Taylor (Charlton Heston) set out to explore their new surroundings, hoping to find intelligent life. In a barren area, they encounter a group of humans, but they are mute savages, who react to the earthmen

with confusion. Suddenly, there is an attack by armed riders on horseback. These are the apes who rule the planet.

One of the astronauts is killed, and the others are taken captive, along with a girl, for scientific study. An injury to Taylor's throat renders him temporarily incapable of speech, and his companion is deprived of intelligence by a brain operation. Taylor makes futile attempts to communicate with his most sympathetic captor, a chimpanzee named Zira (Kim Hunter). She is delighted by his "antics," regards him as an exceptionally intelligent specimen, and makes something of a pet of him, protecting him from more brutal experiments.

Zira's husband, and fellow scientist Cornelius, (Roddy McDowall) is also fascinated by Taylor, and finally the captive astronaut is finally able to speak. After they recover from the shock of encountering a talking human, they are convinced by his story, and dedicate themselves to helping him escape death at the hands of their totalitarian government. Dr. Zaius, a powerful figure in the Simian society, is aware of the origins of Ape supremacy, and knows that Taylor can inadvertently bring the society to ruin, so insists upon the human's destruction. In the end, however, Zaius loses out, and is

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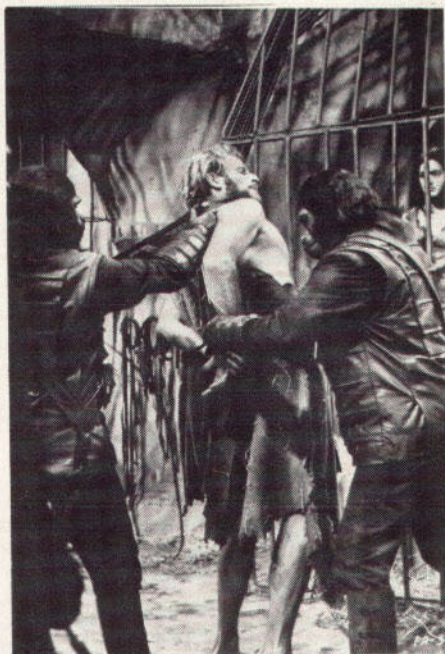
forced to release Taylor and the mute girl, Nova, to a free life in the territory no ape is permitted to enter. There Taylor is horrified to discover that he has never left earth, but travelled into its distant future. In a visually stunning final scene, the humans discover the shattered remains of the Statue of Liberty strewn about the desolate seashore.

BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES (1970)

This first sequel was almost universally condemned for abandoning the deeper social implications of the original, and presenting a conventional, lamebrained, action-melodrama, with minimal characterisation, and too much reliance on the humorous aspects of the civilised simians. Charlton Heston returned as Taylor, but this was little more than a "cameo" appearance, and while Hunter and McDowall were once again excellent as the chimpanzee couple, James Franciscus, a dullish (if decorative) actor, in a poorly-written major part was tiresome indeed.

Continuing to explore the forbidden territory, Taylor and Nova are assailed by frightening illusions. Trapped, Taylor sends his mate back to the Ape city to get help from Zira and Cornelius. There she meets Brent, (Franciscus) another astronaut who has been sent out to discover the fate of Taylor's party. They are captured by apes who are planning to eliminate all life in the forbidden zone, thus ensuring the future of their own society.

Once again, Zira helps them to escape, and they hide in the ruins of New York City, where they find themselves at the mercy of a strange cult of mutant humans who worship a live atomic bomb. When the apes' invade, the mutants plan to detonate the bomb, destroying their enemies along with themselves. Taylor (who is also imprisoned by the mutants). Brent and Nova fight to prevent the holocaust, but when Taylor and Nova are killed, Brent himself pushes the detonation button in a last gesture of defiance — "Beneath the Planet of the Apes" is certainly a pretty lurid melodrama, and a blatant vulgarisation of the original concept, but there is enough action to keep everyone awake, and it is entertaining, in a comic-book fashion.



ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE APES (1971)

The series descended still further into exploitation of the "cute" qualities of the apes, but Hunter and McDowall, the sole holdovers from the original, continue to make Zira and Cornelius so likeable, that it's difficult not to become emotionally involved in this episode, despite all protests from one's grey matter.

A space ship crashes in present-day California, and the population is agog, when three well-dressed chimpanzees, Zira, Cornelius, and their companion Milo (Sal Mineo) emerge from the wreck. Having decided amongst themselves not to reveal their intelligence until they have taken stock of their situation, the apes are turned over to Dr. Lewis Dixon (well portrayed by Bradford Dillman) for study. Zira finally breaks the silence, and Dixon is told the story of their escape from the

nuclear explosion which destroyed their civilisation in the future.

Not surprisingly, he finds the tale a bit difficult to accept, but finally he is convinced, and Zira and Cornelius plead with an astounded human population for understanding that will avert the future disasters. Milo, in the meantime has been killed by a hostile contemporary gorilla, while still under observation in Dixon's lab, so Zira and Cornelius are the sole survivors of the world of the future. They become celebrities, and are feted and made much of, until it is discovered that Zira is pregnant.

Fear grows amongst the humans that the ape's descendants will conquer mankind, and it is decided that Zira's child must be aborted. Panic-stricken, the chimp couple makes a desperate escape attempt, accidentally killing an orderly in the process. Dixon pleads for sanity, but the chimps are now regarded as monsters and a vengeful posse takes up their pursuit. They take refuge with a travelling circus whose proprietor is sympathetic to their plight. Zira gives birth to her baby, and observes that an ordinary chimp in the circus also has a new infant. Finally, they are forced to flee to a deserted oil tanker. Zira, Cornelius and the baby chimp from the circus are destroyed, despite the frantic efforts of Dixon and his girlfriend to save them. The last scene reveals that their own child is still alive under the protection of the circus owner, and assumed by all to be an "ordinary" chimp.

Nearly all similarity to the original has vanished, and many critics found this instalment to be much too cute and sentimental to tolerate. Still, it is well acted, and on the whole a more interesting and thought-provoking story than the first sequel.

CONQUEST OF THE PLANET OF THE APES (1972)

Place: Earth; Time: 1991. There has been a bizarre epidemic which has killed off the cat and dog population of the earth. Pet-loving humans have turned to keeping apes. Eventually, the simians become official slaves, trained to do menial work. Caesar (Roddy McDowall) the son of the murdered Zira and Cornelius, has grown up with the circus, and, appalled at the treatment he sees his fellow apes receiving at the hands of their human masters, he is unable to contain his rage. He is forced to flee for his life while Armando, the circus owner stalls the police. Caesar poses as a newly imported slave ape, and is sold at auction to a corrupt official, Governor Beck. Beck puts Caesar to work with other exceptionally



intelligent apes, in his communications department. Armando has been tricked into admitting Caesar's identity, and has died in an escape attempt. Spurred to avenge Armando, Caesar begins communicating with, and training the mute apes into a rebellious army. He is captured and tortured, but once again escapes, with the help of a sympathetic human. The apes win the battle for freedom, and Caesar is merciful to his former tormentors. He does predict, however, that mankind will eventually destroy itself through strife, and the apes will rule the world uncontested.

A total loss, this one. The ape masks on minor characters have become less convincing, the supporting cast is dreary, and only McDowall is able to arouse any interest at all. The script is full of blatant absurdities, and the final battle is a pretty paltry affair, no more spectacular than the average Trafalgar Square out-of-hand demo. Still, riding on the popularity of its precursors, "Conquest" was a financial success, if nothing else.

"BATTLE FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES" (1973)

Caesar is now the leader of a somewhat bedraggled society of apes and humans, living in peace. His government is increasingly threatened by Aldo (Claude Akins) a surly gorilla who considers humans hopelessly inferior and wishes to eliminate them. Caesar seeks out and watches an old film of his parents, whom he cannot remember. He hears his mother (has it ever occurred to the scriptwriters that Caesar is his own grandfather?) Zira

warn against the destruction of the earth by ape human conflict. In the midst of his musings, there is an attack by our old friends, the radiation-scarred humanoids.

Caesar's son, Cornelius is murdered (making the matter of the line of this family's descent even more baffling) by the villainous Aldo, who usurps the government while Caesar is mourning and destroys all the mutants. Caesar then kills Aldo. The End. This, if possible, is even more fatuous than the last sequel, and as even dyed-in-the-wool "Ape" freaks were

disappointed, the series finally came to rather a bad end. "Battle's" greatest virtue is perhaps the appearance of the venerable John Huston (obviously having a great lark) in the cameo role of the apes' Lawgiver.

Well, all this was nearly two years ago, and now we look forward with interest and some trepidation, to the upcoming television series. Let's hope to find more of the wit and intelligence of the original, and less of the formula violence and muddled scripts of the later episodes.

Page 34: Scenes from "Planet of the Apes".

Above and Below: James Naughton and Ron Harper from the Television series "Planet of the Apes".

