WHERE MAN ONCE STOOD SUPREME - NOW RULE THE APES!

SCROLLS
OF THE SIMIANS

SIMIAN SCROLLS
COMICS GROUP

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FANZINE OF THE MONTH

We did it... We finally, really did it!
Welcome to our comic Tribute SPECIAL

inside... OUR EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH IAN EDGINTON
Simian Scrolls #6 - Contents


Welcome to the comics special! This issue of Scrolls is our tribute to the Apes Comic Strips that, in their various forms, have their own distinct place in Apes history. If you have never encountered the comics, hopefully this issue will encourage you to track down some of the back issues to see what the fuss is all about. Some of the Apes comics stand out as true classics of the genre both in terms of art and scripts. Some truly unforgettable characters, every bit as rounded out and impressive as their Film and T.V. cousins, emerge from the Apes comics. A prime example is the guy on the front cover, the one and only Brutus. Brutus, in many ways, is the definitive gorilla bad guy. Appearing in Marvel's comic saga "Terror on the Planet of the Apes", Brutus kills his wife, humans, mutants and anything else that happens to come into sights. Seen in action (right) doing his bit for ape/human relations, Brutus was that most perfect of bad guys - he had no soft side, he was not misunderstood and he was absolutely beyond redemption. He was pure evil and we love him for it. Carl Critchlow's superb cover art shows Brutus at his malevolent best and it's great to have the old thug back.

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Panic on

“The Planet of the Apes”

Soon to be releasing “The Mighty World of Marvel UK” on to an unsuspecting comics buying world, when author ROB KIRBY isn’t writing and editing re:VOX (the UK’s only specialist magazine devoted to Ultravox, Midge Ure/John Foxx/Visage and every other off-shoot), at our request – and especially for this comics-themed issue – he found some time to compile the following brief history of the POTA comics in Britain.

(This specially written extract is © Rob Kirby 2002)

Whilst Issue 4’s excellent “Apemania in the UK” neatly summed up the atmosphere that surrounded the debut of the Planet of the Apes TV show, and Marvel’s quick response to that with it’s own weekly comic, there was a lot more going on behind the scenes at British Marvel (as it was then known prior to Dez Skinn’s “Marvel Revolution” in 1979) than you may be aware of. The article that follows also clears up a few long-standing misconceptions, but is actually only loosely based on the identically named chapter that can also be found in The Mighty World of Marvel UK.

The Planet of the Apes comic first went on sale in October 1974 (Issue 1 was dated for the week ending: October 26th) alongside the slightly shorter-lived Dracula Lives, which eventually merged into the Apes comic after it’s 87th issue. Clocking up a run of 123 issues, by the end of the 70’s Planet of the Apes was fourth in the ranking of long surviving British Marvel titles behind The Mighty World of Marvel, the title it would eventually merge into. And lurking in-between them, in the second and third place slots, was Spider-Man (in all his varied guises as: Spider-Man Comics Weekly, Super Spider-Man with the Superheroes et al), and the original 148 issue run of The Avengers. By 1985, of course, this ranking had changed entirely, as the horribly re-named Spidey Comic departed at Issue 666, finally reaching the summit that is today occupied (in terms of publication years, at least) by the ever-popular Doctor Who Magazine.

But although the timing was perfect for Marvel’s latest launch, it was never going to be quite so easy to maintain that momentum. Because, in choosing to release a British version of Planet of the Apes so soon after the U.S. magazine, no one had foreseen the hugely awkward problems that this decision would cause. In their haste to launch POTA (borrowing its more affectionate letter page acronym) alongside Dracula Lives, no consideration had been given to the fact that there wasn’t yet a sufficiently large enough inventory of material to stay comfortably behind the U.S. title. Inevitably, the weekly reprints quickly caught up with the stories currently being printed in the original American monthly comic. And, some 22 issues later, parity was reached. In desperation a quick printing space had to be hastily arranged - it was a rather drastic one at that, too.

Taking the earliest episodes of the Killraven series from the American colour anthology comic Amazing Adventures, the British Bullpen then had the bizarre experience of having to re-dialogue and redraw 'stats of the original artwork, converting the cast into Apes of various guises. Once the stories had been re-tooled they now told the brand new adventures of Apeslayer! It sounds almost too farcical to be true, but trust me it very sadly is. This frantic creative brainstorming was referred to in Issue 13 of legendary artist Steranko’s own Mediascene magazine, which made reference to this fiasco back in May 1975. "Marvel’s line of weekly English
[sic] titles hit a major snag recently, when the Planet of the Apes artist missed his deadline and a total lack of backlog caught the chimp by the tail'. Ouch! However: "most importantly, the book came out on time".

But although Apeslayer had created a few weeks of catch up time for everyone involved with the original POTA strips, a more permanent solution was still required. The first step they took was to increase the number of segments each chapter of the movie adaptation took to run to completion. The movie adaptations were then interspersed by longer runs of Doug Moench's various back-up strips, such as his "Terror on the Planet of the Ape's" saga. The combination of these two changes then allowed the weekly comic to stay close to, but never again entirely overtake, its U.S. derived source material.

Unsurprisingly, even before the end of its run the weekly comic completely ran out of new Apes material and turned, instead, to reprinting the recycled (and U.S. edited) versions of the first two movie adaptations taken from the newer Adventures on the Planet of the Apes colour comic. So while Issue 4's article was technically incorrect when it stated that none of these Adventures strips ever saw print in Britain, it is certainly true to say that they were the only Apes strips not fully reprinted (at least once) during the (high-on) three year UK reign of the Apes. Incidentally, the rather mixed selection of back-up strips chosen to support the Apes series deliberately served a two-fold purpose. Firstly they helped to fill out the comic with, mainly, science fiction-based strips, which enabled the Apes material to be eked out for a long enough period to prevent the weekly comic from catching up once more. And, secondly, they were also sneakily aimed at drawing in Marvel fans who were initially, perhaps, less enthusiastic about the Apes franchise.

But, there was something else though that was even more interesting about the Planet of the Apes, which for a while seemed to make absolutely no sense at all. You see, by this point in my research, I had long since exhausted my pitiful supply of index books, which had been so useful in helping to pinpoint exactly where all these American reprints had originally appeared. So, if I needed to know anything else, the only practical option left to me was to purchase those comics whose titles or page counts I still needed to confirm. I was soon lucky enough to be able to purchase a relatively cheap complete set of the American POTA magazines in one go (thanks Steve), and began to list out their contents, noting the page counts for each story in every issue.

As I'd expected, some of the page count totals didn't quite match up with those I'd listed from the British editions, but this time the discrepancy was somewhat different to what I had now come to expect. Instead of the UK reprints having the occasional shortened episode, in common with my findings for most of the other longer running series, several of the Planet of the Apes stories appeared to have more pages than the American editions! Convinced that I must have miscounted, I checked and rechecked, but it made no difference. I had indeed counted correctly the first time. There was only one thing left to do now and so, armed with copies of both the American and British editions, I painstakingly went through each story page by page, just to see if there were any discernible differences between the two editions. In my excitement, I almost couldn't believe what I could plainly see before me.

Where one particular UK issue had two sequential pages, in the American issue selected panels had been removed from both of them, creating just one new page in its place. Elsewhere, whole pages had been removed after publication in the UK, enabling the story to squeeze (at a pinch) into the far more rigid format adopted by the American magazine. Further research confirmed that I had to look at this conundrum the other way around - it was the American magazine that was now effectively reprinting strips from the UK edition! Because both comics were evidently being prepared for publication at almost the same time, as new artwork came in the British Bulldpen would quickly take their stats off the finished artwork first, before passing the art boards on to the U.S. magazine's editorial team for any final editing.

As series writer Doug Moench confirmed in a recent issue of Comic Book Artist (which I can't recommend highly, or often, enough): "We couldn't keep up with their weekly schedule. They asked me to do all that stuff for England that we later put into [the back of] the American version", such as those "Terror" stories. So, in effect, the UK comic was very quickly started to dictate the content of the American parent magazine itself.

And if you do ever get the chance to compare both the UK and American editions side-by-side, you will perhaps notice that, by the time the pages actually appeared in the American monthly magazine, all the captions had been reversed out. So that white text now stood out against a black background instead of vice-versa. Look further and you may also notice that the UK versions of these stories are often missing the grey wash later added to the pages prior to their U.S. appearances.

With Marvel so heavily involved in supporting both versions of Planet of the Apes comics, I suspect they were more than happy to leave the license for Annuals to be picked up by Brown Watson, complete with their own new British produced strips. Besides the occasional new recap page (placed before the next segment of any American story spread out over several weeks worth of issues, starting with the second week of its serialisation), the majority of Marvel UK's new artwork was produced (solely by American artists) for the front covers. This is unfortunate, because Planet of the Apes suffered more-than-most with poor cover artwork when compared to some of Marvel's other British titles during the Seventies. And I'm thinking here of Super Spider-Man and Star Wars Weekly in particular, both of which regularly featured a very high standard of new cover artwork.

The Planet of the Apes covers often had far too many varieties (as Issue 4 rather gracefully described them) of "not so excellent" covers (often by Penciller's Bob Hannigan and Ron Wilson, and Inker Mike Esposito), particularly during the first fifty or so issues. Many top American artists could later be found gracing the remaining covers. They included such talents as Ernie Chan (a.k.a. Chua), Frank Thorne (perhaps better known for Red Sonja), Herb Trimpe (of Hulk fame), Larry Lieber (Stan Lee's brother), and not forgetting the prolific
Pablo Marcos, who can be found across the bulk of covers following Issue 100. Unfortunately, the "excellent cover" (as it was accurately captioned back in Issue 4), was actually just a reprint taken from one of the American POTA magazines, rather than one produced exclusively for Britain.

For the record, the following UK issues featured covers already published by their transatlantic counterpart. Issue 1 (re-used the cover to U.S. Issue 2, which was also blown up on to that "garish" poster also given away with the first UK issue); Issue 18 used a new Ron Wilson pencilled version of the cover to U.S. Issue 4; Issue 27 (re-used U.S. Issue 9); Issue 35 (re-used U.S. Issue 7); Issue 39 (re-used U.S. Issue 8); Issue 46 (re-used U.S. Issue 10); Issue 50 (re-used U.S. Issue 12, as reproduced in Simian Scrolls 4); Issue 61 (re-used U.S. Issue 16); Issue 65 (re-used U.S. Issue 17); Issue 67 (re-used U.S. Issue 18); Issue 70 (re-used U.S. Issue 14); Issue 82 (re-used U.S. Issue 15); Issue 89 (re-used U.S. Issue 13); and lastly Issue 94 (re-used U.S. Issue 19).

Just to be clear, the remaining British covers, except Issue 28 and 30's doctored Killraven-turned-into-Apleslayer embarrassments adapted from their original Stateside appearances facing Amazing Adventures, were all produced solely for the UK. For better or worse.

Some of those better covers accompany this article, and I've tried to select a few images that couldn't be squeezed into the book. I've also included one comparison piece to demonstrate the difference between our uncut POTA strips and the edited versions which American readers were presented with. It's likely that the home audience (along with most UK readers up to now) would have understandably, but incorrectly, presumed that their bulkier magazine contained the unexpurgated versions too.

At least one good thing came out of this severe attack of the "Dreaded Deadline Doom" (as our cousins across the water were so fond of calling such scheduling nightmares) - it made Marvel plan their next almost simultaneous release with much greater care. Oddly enough, the comic in question was another movie tie-in, and one destined to become Marvel UK's biggest seller by the turn of the decade. So what was the name of this trail-blazer, then? Well, in fact, we've already mentioned the name of that comic earlier. Star Wars Weekly.

Marvel had learnt its lessons well. Once Roy Thomas had helped to secure the license, Marvel swiftly set about assembling two parallel creative teams to allow two issues' worth of American length strip material to be produced every month (which was then a standard 17/18 pages). This surfeit of regular length strip material, combined with reprints taken from the failed Pizzazz magazine, and later Star Wars Annuals, would ensure that the British weekly never made POTA's mistake of catching up to its American parent title.

Even better, we were later treated to no less than six stories produced for, but never seen in, America.

When Lucasfilm brought forward the release date for The Empire Strikes Back, Marvel had no choice but to drop that sequence of six strips from the U.S. comic, allowing the Al Williamson drawn adaptation to begin the very next issue. This only added credence to the boast that, at one point, Star Wars was Marvel's most ahead of schedule comic book - all because of the hunger for new strips created by the much-maligned UK division.

In the end I think Planet of the Apes had a far greater effect on the history of British comics than might initially be apparent. It helped to build up a groundswell of interest in Science Fiction comics, which up until then Marvel had had no huge success with Stateside, and it gave Star Wars Weekly a much better opportunity to develop into the huge success it became. And Planet of the Apes probably also encouraged the birth of IPC's 2000AD and Star Lord comics too. So, if you ever have the opportunity to purchase either the U.S. or UK editions of the Planet of the Apes, then do give yourself a treat. You'll find full details about where all the strips surfaced in Britain in the index tucked away in the "American Reprints" section of The Mighty World of Marvel UK. I hope you will all find something of use in there.

But, it's strange that the article in Issue 4 should show a Look-In cover trailing the Apes TV show, too. Because it suddenly made me realise that if Marvel hadn't snapped up the initial strip adaptation rights, then it's very likely that Look-In might have ended up being host to the only portrayal of the Apes in comic strip form, UK Annuals and the later Malibu comics excepted. I shudder to think how Look-In would have presented the series, without it becoming very tongue-in-cheek, in the same gimmicky way that too many of their other TV adaptations ended up. I'm certain that it would have only lasted weeks, and also been a lot less accurate in its portrayal of Ape society too. While, of course, there were a few gems in Look-In (The Tomorrow People, Sapphire and Steel), I really don't believe that their Apes tales would have received anywhere near the same care and attention that Marvel seemed to give the series. I'm sure that the end result
would have been far less enjoyable. It's almost too frightening a thought for a Planet of Apes fan!

The illustrations shown below act as an epilogue, of sorts. The two consecutive pages at the bottom originally appeared in the UK weekly, with the larger reproduction above demonstrating the condensed version of both pages that appeared as a single page in the American edition. This hasty re-editing of the story prior to publication in the States was made necessary by the restrictive page count that was allowed for the comic strips within the U.S. magazine. More examples can, of course, be found in The Mighty World of Marvel UK.

ABOVE, CENTRE:
In the American edition of Planet of the Apes #18, this composite page was the result of re-editing the two pages below following their hurried appearance in the UK comic. This reworking had been done in order to squeeze the story into the far tighter page limits the U.S. magazine laboured under.

BELOW, LEFT:
The original seventeenth story page as used in the British edition of Planet of the Apes #68

BELOW, RIGHT:
The original eighteenth story page as used in the British edition of Planet of the Apes #68
Somewhere To The Side Of The Planet Of The Apes

Time Of The Apes made you giggle and Play-Mate Of The Apes made you blind. What does Land Of The Apes have in store for the weary traveller, besides a familiar-looking logo? Your tour guide: Darren Stockford

The series (executive produced by John Landis, no less) takes the basic premise, along with a handful of characters, from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's 1912 book of the same name. But instead of having the team escaping, it traps them on the prehistoric plateau.

Three series later and they're still there, hunting dino, meddling in the affairs of mysterious tribes, and – in Jennifer O'Dell's case – sending the pulse rate of male viewers rocketing. Whoever designed her skimpy costume has got to be due an Emmy.

Sadly, though, this 'movie' won't win any plaudits. Its origins as a TV show work against it at every turn. There are two distinct 45-minute stories (episodes 2 and 13 from season 1) – the first revolving around giant killer bees, with ape attacks in the background as a secondary plot. And a couple of scenes don't seem to have anything to do with either story – the opening, in particular, is edited quite badly and feels tacked on.

The episodic nature of the original series also means that the film has very little character development over the course of its 95-minute running time. And as we don't know who these people are – or even where they are – to begin with, it takes a fair old while to get into.

A bit of explanation at the beginning would have been useful – a voiceover, perhaps, or some kind of written exposition. OK, so it's not that difficult to figure out what's going on, as The Lost World is such a well-known story. But I can't help thinking that, if just a little bit more care had been taken with this thing, it would have been a far more satisfying movie.

As a TV show, though, I think it looks quite fun. The script has its fair share of cheese. And the CGI creatures (giant bees and a couple of dinosaurs), while not bad, aren't up to Spielberg or BBC standard. But the characters are likeable enough, and, about an hour into the DVD, I realised that I was actually quite enjoying myself.

The first story is a tad light on suspense, but the second one at least has a bit of mystery. Why are the ape men carrying guns? What does the mad scientist chippy have locked up in his workshop? If Renata isn't really Renata, who the heck is she? And – something I was thinking throughout, actually – is that really Gaby Willis from Neighbours? (Yes, that's Rachel Blakely playing Marguerite – the show is filmed down under and has a largely Australian cast.)

The apes here are a primitive type of man, and they don’t speak. There are no theological musings on the difference between man and ape – it’s basically just a whole lot of shooting and fighting. The ape men attack, and the humans whup their hairy butts with whatever weapons they happen to have on them at the time. And the Lost World doesn’t appear to be – as the tagline would have it – “ruled by” this species either. (I’m betting it’s the dinosaurs who wear the trousers.)

So, Planet Of The Apes this ain’t. But as long as you don’t expect it to be – or even expect a proper film, for that matter – The Lost World: Land Of The Apes should white away an hour and a half of your time in a relatively pain-free fashion.

I bet they don’t stick that on the poster, though.

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* You'll find the Lost World web site at www.lostworldtv.net

* There are two other Lost World 'movies' in this series – one called Vampires, the other Gladiator.

* In Land Of The Apes' first story, Professor Challenger tells Marguerite that her 'lack of faith is becoming disturbing.' Subtle Star Wars reference, or complete coincidence? You decide.

* I own two DVDs released by Prism Leisure, and they both display a very regular, and very annoying, picture stutter on my Samsung 709. They do, however, play fine on my PC.
MASKS, COSTUMES, PROPS & ACTION FIGURES FROM:

Planet of the Apes, Star Wars, Aliens, Predator, Batman, Robin, Catwoman, X-Files, Scream, This Island Earth, Chucky, Jason, Freddy, Michael Myers, Pumpkinhead, Leatherface, Spawn, Munsters, Jim Carrey, Hellraiser, Mars Attacks, Species, Superman, Bram Stoker's Dracula, Smiley, Godzilla, Creature From The Black Lagoon, Cryptkeeper, Roswell, Casper, Star Trek, Nosferatu, etc, & Dracula, Frankenstein, Mummy, Devils, Wolves, Werewolves & Wolfmen, Dragons, Witches, Vampires, Ghouls & general horror.

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NEXT YOU'LL BE TELLING US THESE MODELS HAVE A SOUL!

Amongst the many fantastical new characters that inhabit the dark vision that is Tim Burton's Planet of the Apes the puffy cheeked Orangutan, Senator Nado from the dinner party scene (played magnificently by Glenn Shadix - see this issue's interview!) has grown to become one of my personal favourites. Being such a huge fan of this particular character I was disappointed to discover after much searching, a total absence of the Senator amongst the current Apes merchandise. Eager to include him in my Apes collection, I decided to rectify the situation by attempting to create my own Nado figure.

My intention was to make a head and shoulder bust, so I began by making a crude plaster core on which to sculpt by wrapping a light bulb in a sheet of tin foil. I then removed the light bulb and filled the void with plaster. When set, the result was basically just a hunk of plaster but the basic shape served my need. I began to sculpt over the plaster core, using a clay called "super sculpey", and after a couple of evenings' work, I finally had a completed figure I was happy with. The sculpture was then baked on a low heat on a conventional oven until it fully hardened, at which point the sculpey becomes ceramic-like. It was allowed to cool before I began "giving the beast a soul" by hand-painting it using water-based acrylics.

STEVE EDWARDS

 Scrolls Comment -

At Scrolls we never cease to be amazed by the genius and sheer inventiveness of Steve Edwards. Anyone who has read issue 4 will already be aware of Steve's talent. The level of detail on this Senator Nado bust is astonishing and if there is any justice in the world, Steve has got to have a job sculpting on the sequel! Don't forget, if you are inspired to try out some model kits or modelling yourself, the best starting point would be "Drone", the bi-monthly publication of The Film and Television Model Club. Details can be obtained from Andrew Hall, 172, High Hope, St. Crook, County Durham, DL15 9JA.
We Remember...

In the space of just a single issue Simian Scrolls was saddened to hear of the passing away of not just one - but FOUR important contributors to the NITA saga. It was never our intention to turn this issue into an obituary special but please, take a moment and with us remember...

Hunter was born Janet Cole, in Detroit, on November 12, 1922. Her mother was a concert pianist. She recalled a lonely childhood, picking characters out of books, pretending they were her friends, and acting out little scenes with them in front of the mirror. She made her stage debut in her teens and her film debut in the 1943 thriller The Seventh Victim, in which she stumbles upon a group of devil-worshippers in New York. A couple of years later she was reduced to acting out Ingrid Bergman's lines opposite actresses auditioning for minor roles in Alfred Hitchcock's Spellbound. It was Hitch who recommended her as female lead in the English classic A Matter of Life and Death aka Stairway to Heaven (1946). "Sensible, pretty, could be the girl next door, can act, good voice, good legs," he told Director Michael Powell.

Back in the US she landed the role of Stanley Kowalski's much put-upon wife Stella in the original stage production of A Streetcar Named Desire (1947-49). The Kowalskis' lives are disrupted by the arrival of Stella's sister, Blanche DuBois, a faded southern belle played by Jessica Tandy. Brando and Hunter were part of the Actors Studio, the famous New York establishment that pioneered 'method' acting in American movies and plays, the approach in which the actor seeks to become, rather than simply play a character. The immediacy and intensity of the action and the passion of Tennessee Williams' drama had a huge impact on theatre audiences.

Brando had difficult relationships with many co-stars, but got on well with Hunter, nursing her through various personal crises, a recurring feature in her life. Hunter had married William Baldwin in 1944, with whom she had a daughter, but they divorced a couple of years later. She would later marry actor and producer Robert Emett and they had a son. After a long run, the producers were lining up new actors for Streetcar. Hunter knew her understudy, Carmella Pope, was going to be overlooked. "You'll never get the part when I leave unless they see you do it," Hunter told her. Hunter faked illness to give the young actress her break.

Jack Warner did not want Hunter, Tandy or Karl Malden in the film, dismissing Hunter as "a negative screen personality". Director Elia Kazan agreed to accept Gone With the Wind's Vivien Leigh as Blanche, but successfully held out for Hunter and Malden. His faith was ultimately rewarded when, of the four principles, Brando was the only one not to win an Academy award.

It should have been the perfect springboard to movie fame and fortune for Hunter, but she lacked the sexuality of the two and found it difficult to secure good leading roles. She was the estranged wife of crusading newspaper editor Humphrey Bogart in Deadline USA (1952), and Russian emigrant Jose Ferrer's wife in Anything Can Happen (1952). Her career stalled when her name appeared on one of the Hollywood blacklists for no other reason than a naive sense of social justice and attendance at a few meetings. She made very few major films in the decade preceding Planet of the Apes (1968). She got the role of the sympathetic chimp scientist Zira only after Julie Harris balked at the arduous make-up process.

Valium helped Hunter to overcome feelings of claustrophobia during the four-hour sessions. Producer Mort Abrahams recalled her first day: "She ran to me and threw her arms around me and cried and cried. She could not adjust at that moment to what was going on with her visage."

Planet of the Apes may have seemed like wacky fantasy-adventure, but Hunter studied chimp behaviour at Bronx Zoo to get into character. She went on to play Zira in two sequels and appeared in numerous television shows.

Ultimately she made three classic films in three different decades, but the feeling remains that it could have been more, had she shown the ruthlessness that took others to the top.

For an actress, she was unusually modest, sensitive, and some might say highly-strung, though she always seemed happy to chat with fans and reply to letters. "I would say 99% of my fan mail comes from people who are talking about apes", she told me while I was researching a book on Planet of the Apes. She often received photographs of herself as a chimpanzee to autograph. "It doesn't bother me... That's the film that they just adored."

Kim Hunter died at home in Greenwich Village, New York, aged 79.

James Gregory certainly earned the description "character actor", that catchall term for those who never quite attained genuine stardom. He reputedly played more than 1,000 different characters in film, television, radio and stage plays, during a career that spanned half a century. He died at home in Sedona, Arizona, aged 90.

Gregory was Elvis Presley's millionnaire dad in Clambake (1967), the land-hungry rancher who shoots his own son in The Sons of Katie Elder (1965), John Wayne's comeback movie after his first cancer operation and the conniving TV host in the brilliant Cold War thriller The Manchurian Candidate (1962).

But his most celebrated role is possibly that of the larger-than-life Inspector Frank Luger on the light-hearted TV cop show Barney Miller. He played Barney's buddy for seven years in the seventies and eighties, acquiring a mail-order bride in the final series.

Gregory was born in the Bronx on December 23, 1911, and grew up in New
Rochelle, New York, showing early promise in drama and sport. It seems he was good enough to consider a career as a golfer, as well as an actor. But it was on Wall Street rather than Broadway that he trod the boards after leaving school, beginning as a runner.

There were also spells in real estate and sales. He maintained an interest in acting, appearing with local groups in up-state New York, but he was in his mid-twenties before turning professional, earning $25 a week touring small towns in Pennsylvania and West Virginia and performing in church halls and school gyms.

In 1939 he made his Broadway debut in Key Largo, with Paul Muni and Jose Ferrer. It was the first in a long line of celebrated productions with famous co-stars, including The Doomed Hour, with Paul Newman and Karl Malden and Death of a Salesman, playing Biff opposite Lee J. Cobb's Willy Loman.

His acting career had by that time been interrupted by the Second World War, during which he served in the Pacific with the Marines. One of his earliest films was The Naked City (1948), the hard-edged, quasi-documentary thriller that revolutionised the screen portrayal of police work.

Television took off after the war and Gregory appeared in just about every major American series during that early golden age, frequently as guest star, though he played the lead role of Barney Ruditsky in The Lawless Years (1959-61). Based on the memoirs of a real Police Lieutenant, the series was set in the 1920s and paid close attention to factual and procedural detail.

On the big screen, at much the same time, he was Sergeant Schaeffer on the trail of Rod Steiger's eponymous Al Capone but the sheer volume of his television work mitigated against typecasting. In the early days of live TV drama he appeared in five different shows in 10 days.

He was in the very first episode of The Twilight Zone and turned up on Alfred Hitchcock Presents, The Untouchables, The Virginian, Bonanza, Gunsmoke, The Wild Wild West, Hogan's Heroes, The Fugitive, Star Trek, Ironside, The High Chaparral, Hawaii Five-O, Mission: Impossible, Columbo, McCloud, The Partridge Family, MASH, Cannon, Quincy MD and The Love Boat, and those are just some of the better-known shows.

During his career he took on the role of priest and doctor, gangster and gunslinger. He even played piano in the Louis Prima Musical Hey Boy! Hey Girl! (1959) and sang in a barbershop quartet. Hero or villain, Gregory commanded authority. He was Dean Martin's exasperated boss MacDonald when Old Red Eyes tried to develop the character of Matt Helm as an American James Bond in The Silencers (1966) and its sequels.

One of his most popular roles was that of Ursus, the war mongering gorilla general in Beneath the Planet of the Apes (1970). He got the part because Orson Welles refused to wear the extensive make-up and it always delighted Gregory to remind people that it was between him and Citizen Kane.

In real life Gregory was less intelligent than some of his roles might imply. He was happily married for more than 50 years (to the same woman, Anne). He enjoyed it when fans came up to him, said they loved his work and reeled off the shows and films in which he had appeared ... even if they frequently failed to put a name to the familiar face.

Corey attended High School in New York before winning a scholarship to the Fagin School of Drama. He and his Wife Hope moved to Hollywood where he enjoyed some modest film roles and during the Second World War he served as a photographer in the US Navy, earning citations for film taken by him of a kamikaze attack on his ship.

Gradually, he eased his way back into acting during the 1960s including roles as Sheriff Steve Bedsole in Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid (1969) and in Cold Blood (1967). To Apes fans, of course, Jeff is the bespectacled mutant, Caspian in Beneath the Planet of the Apes (1970).

John Lee Thompson was born in Bristol and educated at Dover College. On leaving school he took to the stage and was soon writing, his second play, Double Error, having a west-end run in 1935. Shortly afterwards Thompson started work at Elstree in their scriptwriting department. He served most of the Second World War in the RAF and after the war resumed his script-writing career. Thompson continued to work in films during the 50s and after some forgettable musical comedies he moved on to more serious dramas, including blockbusters such as The Guns of Navarone and the original Cape Fear. He continued to work in Hollywood over the next three decades and along with Arthur P Jacobs, was responsible for some of the early developments and decisions that would ultimately bring Planet of the Apes to the screen. He is best remembered by Apes fans for directing Conquest and Battle for the Planet of the Apes.

Called before the House Committee on Un-American Activities in 1951, actor Jeff Corey refused to furnish the names of possible Communists, saying "The only issue was, did you want to just give them their token names so you could continue your career or not?" Because Jeff Corey did not, he was blacklisted and being unable as a result to act, he found labouring work. This funded a degree in speech therapy at the University of California. later, in a garage adapted for the purpose, Jeff became an acting coach, his pupils including James Dean and Jack Nicholson.

Jeff's approach in teaching acting was to concentrate on the individual actor, bringing out their qualities and not imposing his own. He was opposed to the technique of actors using their own lives to play roles - "I don't poke about with anybody's mind" was his approach.
KIRBY AND ADAMS - LEGENDS ON THE PLANET OF THE APES

To most comic book fans, the names Jack Kirby and Neal Adams will be forever linked with the Fantastic Four and Batman respectively, both artist creating for each the definitive look. Both artists are among the absolute all-time legends of comic book artists. It is only fit and proper, therefore, that both artists also contributed to the greatest legend of the science-fiction genre, Planet of the Apes.

Jack “King” Kirby’s career in comics stretched from the 1930s for nearly six decades. With Joe Simon, Kirby drew and/or created many of the comics legends, including Captain America, The Young Allies and Sandman. With Stan Lee in 1961 and the first issue of Marvel’s Fantastic Four, Jack helped create the pantheon of Marvel characters that went on to include Thor, The Avengers, The X-Men and just about any other Marvel character of that period. In 1971 Jack Kirby returned to DC, creating the classic “Fourth World Trilogy” as well as Omac, The Demon and Kamandi (the latter with its Statue of Liberty and post-apocalypse images having distinct echoes of Planet of the Apes). Jack Kirby continued working as an artist until his passing in 1994.

In the 1980s, Jack Kirby did work in the animation field, including presentation work for proposed new series. As all good Apes fans know, there had already been an animated series, Return to the Planet of the Apes running on NBC. In the earlier live-action Planet of the Apes TV show, Joe Ruby and Ken Spears, men who are well-known for their animated work, were Story Editors and it was presumed that while Jack Kirby was working at Ruby Spears, they wished to develop a new Planet of the Apes animated series and asked Jack to produce some presentation art. Sadly, nothing came of the project but we do at least, through the investigative work of Eric Nolen-Weathington, have the joy of seeing at least some of Jack’s art work. That is reproduced below and the familiar names of Virdon and Burke are still there, together with a politically correct “blonde companion of astronauts” and Toomak, a human slave boy.

This artwork is reproduced with the kind permission of TwoMorrows Publishing and their Editor, John Morrow. TwoMorrows publish The Jack Kirby Collector, which comes very highly recommended by Scrolls. (e-mail: twomorrow@aol.com website: www.twomorrows.com)
It is frustrating to think what might have become of this series, particularly if Jack Kirby's fertile mind and pencil were allowed free reign on it. It is also interesting to see that even during the fallow years of the 1980s, when things were supposedly quiet on the Apes front, there were plans in the background to revive Apes. It just goes to show that Apes simply won't go away.

As if Jack Kirby's involvement wasn't mind-blowing enough, the unique talents of Neal Adams also landed on the Planet of the Apes briefly during the mid 1970s. Born in 1941 in New York, Neal Adams was part of the younger generation who shook up DC Comics during the late 60s and early 70s. Neal's unique and highly experimental art style was encouraged by Carmine Infantino, then supremo at DC, and Neal became an instant fan favourite. His new dynamic visual style, with amazing perspective and realism, revitalised many DC characters. Realising what they had on their hands, DC quickly utilised Neal as their pre-eminent cover artist during this period, Neal illustrating virtually every DC book in print at the time. Neal is perhaps best known for his amazing work on Batman but also contributed, in the early 70s, some ground-breaking work to the original X-Men. Neal Adams continues to be one of the most influential comics artists ever and echoes of his work can be found throughout the comics industry.

As any good Apes fan will instantly recall, Power Records in the 70s put out a series of vinyl discs with dramatised stories based upon the Apes TV series. Whilst the stories themselves are, to put it charitably, a little clunky, the same most certainly can not be said for the stunning sleeve art work created by none other than Neal Adams. As seen on the example below, even though Neal's flirtation with Planet of the Apes was brief, the quality of his work stands comparison with any other art work in the Apes world.

Whilst the Apes comics, both modern and old, enjoyed a remarkable run of talented and famous artists, it is, to put it mildly, enticing to think what Kirby and Adams would have made of a full length Apes comic strip.

John Roche
'And some will say it was just a hairy tale':

The UK Marvel POTA comic, 1974-1977

As an idea, it was flawless. Planet of the Apes was a mass phenomenon, with huge popular appeal, that already supported a merchandising industry churning out products from frisbees to action figures. Five commercially successful films had together introduced a rich and complex alternative history of Earth's past and future, populated with vibrant characters and situations, and centred on a compelling premise. And now a live-action weekly Apes TV series was set to generate even more fascination with a world in which Apes 'now ruled supreme'.

When, in 1974, planners for the Marvel comic empire secured the rights to publish an Apes comic on both sides of the Atlantic, the potential for the new title — both financially and creatively — appeared to be huge. In the launch issue, Marvel supremo Stan Lee announced the birth of "possibly the most dramatic comics weekly ever published!". There was certainly a built-in fan-base, with a proven willingness to part with hard cash in return for Apes material, on which Marvel could rely.

There was an established Apes universe that illustrators and authors could make immediate, and instantly recognisable, use of — meaning little time need be wasted on exposition, scene-setting, or establishing reader habit. The rights to adapt all five Apes movies in graphic serial form provided a wealth of ready fan-friendly material with which to fill its pages. And the weekly broadcast of those new hour-long TV Apes adventures offered Marvel a level of free promotional support for all-things-Ape that the company could never have afforded to pay for. The first editorial expressed the company's excitement about securing the Apes comic franchise:

"Ever since 1967... we’ve been convinced that here was a situation that was a natural for a picture-strip for Marvel."

In practice, things were not quite as picture-perfect as everyone involved had hoped. When, in June 1977, the publishers of The Mighty World of Marvel in the UK announced that they would be dropping Planet of the Apes from the four-story weekly comic at the end of the current simian storyline — the fifth instalment of the 'Future History Apes Chronicles' — loyal readers who had stuck with the magazine through the highs and
lows of its turbulent three-year history were more disappointed than they were surprised. Production on the other side of the Atlantic had already come to a halt. The UK edition of the *Apes* comic had ousted its American parent, but only by some six months.

As a publishing venture, the British edition of the Marvel *Apes* comic had been beset with problems almost from the first issue — difficulties that were an unhelpful mixture of the economic and the artistic. Under-resourced and over-stretched, Marvel in the UK had steered the *Apes* comic through two relaunches, in an attempt to bolster the ailing title. But their efforts had not been enough to save it. As it disappeared from the newsstands, its producers would (probably grudgingly) have accepted that the legacy of the British *Apes* comic would come to be judged as a mixed one.

Some of the material that graced its pages was stunning. But at other times the stories in the UK edition of *Planet of the Apes* could be frustrating, were occasionally unfathomable and often appeared completely disjointed. If the British *Apes* comic has to be judged a ‘publishing failure’ — and the balance of the evidence suggests that it does — it remains a glorious one.

Part of the difficulty in writing an accurate history of Marvel’s operations in the UK is the absence (at least in the public domain) of circulation figures for the company’s various titles — and, in particular, charts that compare British and American sales. In his masterly 1996 book *Planet of the Apes as American Myth* cultural historian Eric Greene describes the ‘phenomenal’ success of the American Marvel *Apes* comic, which he claims “was one of the most popular Marvel has ever produced.” But was that apparent triumph matched here in Britain? Interviewed by the apesrule.com website in 2001, John Freeman — editor of Titan’s Burton-*Apes* tie-in comic — suggested that “the sales of Marvel’s *Planet of the Apes* comic in the UK in the 1970s were tremendous.”

And yet, the only possible explanation for the termination of the British *Ape* comic franchise in 1977 is that — even as one quarter of a ‘family’ title — Marvel saw it as uneconomic: meaning that the imprint had too few readers to sustain it. A far more likely pattern for the *Apes* comic’s performance (in the UK and the US) would be of an early sales surge, followed by a protracted and ultimately irreversible circulation decline, ending in cancellation. One of Marvel’s rare comments on the comic’s performance (at the time) came in issue 116, when the editors admitted that the *Apes*’ merger with *Dracula Lives* had, at least in part, been driven by “economic necessity”. We might not know the detail, but the trend of those sales graphs cannot be in doubt. It seems commercial common sense that Marvel would not have dumped the *Apes* had it been otherwise.

A further restriction on researchers is that none of the principal creative talents behind Marvel UK from that era have gone on record to discuss the *Apes*’ saga. Dez Skinn, ex-Editorial Director of Marvel UK (and now editor of *Comics International*) confirmed to this writer in October 2001 that Neil Tennant (later of Pet Shop Boys fame) had been the production editor for Marvel’s British titles at the time of the *Apes* — and suggested that all *Ape* enquiries be directed to him. However, *Simian Scrolls* editor John Roche had previously been assured by the Pet Shop Boys’ personal assistant that Tennant never worked on the *Apes* title during his Marvel tenure. As a result, overall responsibility for the British edition of the comic remains ‘unclaimed’.

In terms of comic content, things began extremely promisingly. The adaptation of the first *Apes* movie (starring, for copyright reasons, a suitably de-Hestonised human hero) was an immediate attention-grabber. Initially billed as a ‘six-parter’ (an unchanged catch-line from the American artwork) the UK version was thinned out over eleven issues. Issue 12 brought the first instalment of ‘Terror on the Planet of the Apes’, a study of political and social power struggles in a future *Ape* society, centering on the lives of two recurring characters (who were to become *Ape* regulars): the chimp Alexander and the human Jason. Of the non-film stories, the ‘Terror’ serial was to provide some of the comic’s strongest material, but already disquiet amongst *Ape* fans was finding expression on the letters’ page. Reader Paul Donnachie from Rosshire pleaded for the *Apes* to be given full reign of the comic. The back-up stories were, in his view:

“too corny for words. Please take them out and feature the *Apes* on their own.”

The fact that the *Apes* had to surrender space to weak supporting acts was not the only concern of
readers. Issue 20 introduced 'Evolution's Nightmare', a neatly plotted, but poorly executed, simian short story — and the first really clear indication that Marvel might be struggling to find sufficient quality material to fill the Ape segment of the magazine. It seemed that Marvel — needing to space out its film adaptations, and unable to trespass on TV Ape territory — was uncertain which creative directions the comic should now take.

The background feature articles on TV and movie Apeform offered unparalleled touring the European promotional circuit, and no coverage of the live TCP Ape events here in the UK (see SS Issue 4). In effect, with the exception of the voices of the fans that made it to the letters page, the bits that made the comic an identifiably British production were its weakest components — the original Ape stories, and the hurriedly prepared new covers. The scale and excitement of British 'Apemania' was something that never found reflection in the pages of the magazine.

In the best genre worlds of today, great store is set on the value of continuity and 'the canon'. Creators and producers work hard to ensure that TV story arcs, comic books tie-ins and stand-alone novels all reflect the same imagined sci-fi reality. Producers often yet the story outlines of 'other format' work to ensure that conflicts and contradictions in the overall narrative are minimised.

Between 1974 and 1977, the Marvel Ape comic made few efforts to pull the already distressed circular time-line (from the Planet movie to the TV series and round again) back into shape. In 'Quest for the Planet of the Ape's' (beginning in issue 102) Marvel attempted a brief bridge between the events of Conquest and Battle, but moves to explore the established Ape universe were rare. In the main, Marvel cheerfully ignored the established record and set about rewriting Ape history — even going so far as to reinvent its evolutionary origins.

Had the result been the creation of exciting new 'imaginings' of simian and human relations across the epochal vastness of Earth's history, this could have been all well and good. If it was going to generate instead lots of join-the-dots Marvel dramas — with only the faintest of connections to the Ape mythos — peopled by over-muscled characters who would stand around shouting threats and pointing at one another, it was a less exciting prospect.

In the Ape Forum, the editors responded snippily to fan criticism of the comic's disregard for Ape continuity. They wrote:

"We've never, ever, felt committed to follow strictly the stories of the films... [If we did so then Planet of the Ape's would have a limited life. And we don't think that would be a sensible thing to happen."

The editors, however, made no comment on the danger posed to the longevity of the comic by a reliance on shaky original Ape strips.

It was the fateful issue 23, dated March 29 1975, that confirmed how serious the story shortage had become, when the risible,
inexcusable 'Apeslayer' serial began. Featuring such hideously memorable chapters as 'The Airport of Death', this tale of a sword-wielding superhero battling alien Ape invaders was simply a re-inked reprint of Marvel's 'Killraven' adventures in which the Martians' heads were replaced by simian ones. Some might have excused the 'Apeslayer' debacle as an inventive response to a copy crisis. Most, though, were aghast that Marvel had the bare-faced gall.

When, in issue 35, a fan letter deploiring the crass deception was published, the editors were unrepentant. They asked:

"Can you fault us for bringing that experience [the 'Killraven' story] to a host of Marvelites to whom [artist] Neil Adams has been just a name."

The answer from most fans aware of Marvel's sleight of hand, was 'yes, we can — sort yourselves out'. Things did, temporarily, improve. Beginning in issue 31, 'Kingdom on an Island of the Ape' — in which time traveller Daryl Zane was plunged into a 'nightmare world of Ape supremacy' — was a notable return to form. The Tom Sutton-illustrated 'City of Nomads' (the first installment of the 'Future History Chronicles', which began in issue 47), was a powerful and imaginative work, over which fan opinion was divided. In the view of some, the Chronicles were excellent, richly-detailed and expansive simian epics. Others saw them as overly-intricate tales of 'heroic deeds' too steeped in the 'mythical' traditions of the fantasy genre. As the issues passed, fan discontent continued to pre-occupy the letters pages. As well as story quality, much attention focused on the space afforded the Ape.

In issue 62, Mark Philpott from London bemoaned the fact that: "It is called Planet of the Apes, yet only nine or ten pages are normally devoted to it." Such complaints increased as, by the time of the Battle adaptation, the Ape had to share space with such production-line Marvel pulp as 'Monster in the Cellar', and 'A Martian Walks Among Us', and were pushed away from the front-end of the comic.

The later film adaptations did much, however, to revive the enthusiasm of fans for the Ape material itself. Issue 63 offered a cracking prologue to Conquest, and issue 74 a more radical and unforgiving version of Caesar's victory speech than that which made the released cut of the film. The Battle adaptation was an equally strong piece of work — both graphically and narratively. Together, they suggested that the Marvel might yet be able to turn the title around. But problems persisted. The fact that panels from the US artwork were chopped for the British edition was, creatively speaking, appalling. The rationale was wholly economic, not artistic: the stories had to fit the Ape page quota in the UK, and would be sliced and repasted until they did. It was not a decision which suggested Marvel was lavishing care and attention on the title.

As the Battle adaptation neared its conclusion, copy pressures were reaching a new intensity. In issue 123, when asked by reader Paul Norton of Edgware what the comic had planned for the Ape's next, the editors admitted that: "we just don't know. But we'll think of something."

For reader Ian Thompson of County Durham, the post-Battle strips were the point of no return: "if ever there was a worse Planet of the Ape story", he warned in MWM issue 245, "I would commit suicide." Few readers felt the position was quite so life threatening, but that sense of encroaching malaise was increasingly widely felt.

The punishing publishing schedule meant that the issue of creative quality was constantly pushed to the back of Marvel UK's priorities. Once enthusiasm for the title began to wane, a vicious circle was set in motion. Fan disenchantment led to a reduction in sales. That in turn dissuaded Marvel in the UK from prioritising the title, commissioning works of the highest quality, or giving the Ape a higher profile. The decline in story quality that followed accelerated the slump in sales, and so on.

And yet, readers who had stuck with the magazine after all the knock-backs of page cuts, title mergers, the relegation in the status of the Ape, and more, knew that they had earned the epithet of 'Ape fan'. As a reader of the British Marvel Ape comic this writer was devoted — picking up my reserved copy from the newsagent each week and reading it from cover to cover: superheroeic space-filler included.

There was just one week the wholesaler forgot to send through my copy — earning the wrath of my early-teen indignation. This left an infuriating one-issue gap in my collection, which took 26 years and an e-bay auction to fill. But by the new year of 1977, the numbers of such loyal
fans had fallen alarmingly. If there was a huge outpouring of fan protest at the dropping of the Apes, Marvel UK did a good job of suppressing it — but, sadly, they probably didn’t need to make much effort. Marvel wasted few words of regret on the Apes’ removal, noting simply that the simians would be now leaving the MWM line-up” — effective immediately.

It could have been, and it should have been, so different. What had begun so confidently with the edgy and atmospheric first film adaptation in issue one had ended, some 33 months later, with new and sketchily drawn characters named Alaric and Graymalkyn fending off the “attack of the terror-toads” — hardly the most fitting or dignified of finales.

What was it, though, that ultimately sealed the fate of the British Marvel Planet of the Apes comic? It’s a question to which there is no simple, solitary answer. A range of causes have to be weighed in the balance.

The single most calamitous event — and one about which Marvel could do nothing — was the surprise cancellation of the live Apes TV series by CBS-Fox. The mid-season axing of the show robbed Marvel, at a stroke, of the built-in audience on which the comic’s launch had been premised. It was a body blow from which Apemania as a whole never properly recovered, here or in the States.

The clear message being sent out by the American TV company was that the time of the Apes had passed. The only possible consequence of their decision was a reduction in the number of Apes comic buyers.

Had the TV series been a ratings success, renewed for a second full season in the ‘fall’ of 1975, the prospects for the Apes comics on both sides of the Atlantic would have looked immeasurably brighter. In the UK the loss of what had been a hit TV series struck the British Apes comic particularly acutely.

Initially, both the American and British editions battled on without the promotional aid of small-screen Ape adventures — but the depressive effects were tangible. And when, in February 1977, the US company took the decision to drop the American title, it was effectively announcing the death of the British edition at the same time. It was extremely unlikely that American money would be spent to commission comic strip work that would not see the light of day in the USA. Marvel in the UK were in no position to generate sufficient funds on their own — and the Apes were already a financial drain for the UK company as it was. In the Spring of 1977, there was little prospect of a ‘declaration of independence’ by the British comic book masters of the Apes.

The impact of the TV show’s loss, together with the dictates of Marvel in the US, left the British Apes comic with no credible future of its own. But if there was no escaping those irresistible external pressures, Marvel UK cannot escape its own share of the responsibility for the title’s demise. It too was complicit in its own way — most fundamentally by producing a comic that too few British readers were interested in subscribing to.

Of course, there are a number of things that can be said in mitigation on UK Marvel’s behalf. Firstly, Marvel’s difficulties with new British titles were not restricted to the simian world.

Having reanimated the ‘prince of the undead’, in the same week that it launched the Planet of the Apes comic, Marvel first reinterred and then revived the unhappy vampire as Dracula Lives staggered in and out of the publishing graveyard. The Mighty World of Marvel line-up changed repeatedly as its producers struggled to find the right character mix. So Marvel UK’s teething troubles extended beyond the Apes imprint.

Secondly, the high expectations of British Apes fans may have been unrealistic and unrealisable. What many wanted was a multi-strip comic in which the monopoly of the Apes was total, and which opened up the rich vistas of the worlds of film and TV Apedom to breathtaking dramatic effect. The economics of the situation meant that that was simply beyond the ability of Marvel to deliver.

On all licensed ‘tie-in’ genre comics the profit margins are that much tighter than they are on ‘original’ work, as publishers have to pay royalties for the rights to use trademarked names and characters. That meant Marvel needed every reader it could get — and, as became apparent — British Ape fans were not numerous enough to sustain the title unaided. Marvel needed other ‘attractions’ to entice the casual comic customer — as well as the simian-minded hardcore — to part with their 8p (and then their 9p, and finally their 10p). Hence the ‘carnival of monsters’, and the
catalogue of ‘fantastical’ stories, in the back-half of the magazine.

Thirdly, it remained a major headache for the British title that the Apes comic in the UK had to produce four times the output demanded of its American counterpart. It was a daunting workload, made more difficult to manage by the newness of Marvel operations in the UK, and the fact so many parallel titles were launched in Britain in close succession. For the overworked British Marvel team the task was rarely to select the finest possible comic stories from brimming portfolios of material, and more often to ensure that the artwork wasn’t sent off to the printers with blank pages. But this is more of an explanation than a justification for the uneven quality of the Apes magazine.

To Marvel’s credit, the company stuck with it, even as the problems of selling the title multiplied. They could have bailed far sooner. However, it was all to no avail. The death of the Apes in comic book form was announced three issues ahead in MWM No 245, in less than sombre tones:

“yeah, it’s true — we are coming to the end of Marvel’s simian sagas!"

Even with such forewarning, the end still came abruptly — the sense was of a project abandoned, unfinished, with little sense of closure (much like the final ‘sea-sick’ moments of the TV series).

After cancellation, the British Marvel Ape comic seemed to disappear from view, even within Ape fandom. Unlike the best of its contemporaries the comic struggled to attain the status of a ‘collectible’. Something of a rehabilitation in the comic’s reputation has taken place in recent times (evident well before the Burton film), reflected not only in higher prices for traded copies but also in an increased appreciation amongst fans of the comic’s strengths. A widespread view, particularly amongst lifelong fans who bought the comic at the time, is one of ‘critical affection’ for the title, perhaps reinforced by a greater understanding of the pressures under which this ‘glorious’ publishing failure was produced. If it remained an underachiever, rarely realising its real potential, it is still thanks to the dogged efforts of Marvel UK that we have those 123 Ape weekly issues.

Perhaps the greatest solace that the UK Marvel team can take from their Ape experiences, is the acknowledgement that all of the publishers who, in subsequent years, have followed in their footsteps have also struggled with the format.

For reasons not immediately clear, the history of the Apes comic imprint since 1977 has continued to be ‘troubled’, both here and in United States. The — often excellent — Adventure series, only fitfully circulated in the UK, was undeservedly short-lived. The titles launched on the back of the new Burton movie proved to have even brief shelf lives. Titan’s new Apes comic ended its run after only five issues, and the stunning new Dark Horse monthly lasted just six (after the movie adaptation and new mini-series). From 1974 to the present, the efforts of Apes to conquer the comic book world have been repeatedly thwarted.

Rich Cross

Thanks to John Roche, Rob Kirby and Phil Tonge for help in researching this article. All errors of fact and questions of interpretation remain my responsibility alone.

Masthead from the Apes Forum readers' letters page — where criticism and irritation were expressed as frequently as praise.
I: Thief

It was late and most of Ape City slept. During the day it could be a lively place, citizens would hustle to and fro, engaged in the everyday activities that made it the busiest in the known world. The city was the hub, the centre from which smaller villages radiated outwards like planets around a sun. The halls of government resided there. Police, Military and Health - all had their respective headquarters within its’ limits. But after dark it was different...

Things wound down quickly in this City of apes. It’s citizens would go home to their families, draw the curtains and go to bed early. When night fell and only the most important roads remained lit by torches, there would be little sign of life, other than perhaps a gorilla officer on his beat. Few walked the streets, not because of superstition or fear, it simply wasn’t in their nature. When the sun fell the city slept...

Unless you were a thief.

He pressed himself tight against the side of a building and became just another shadow. A Gorilla strolled by, on his way to the night shift and totally oblivious to the Chimpanzee just a few feet away. He passed and was gone. The street was quiet once more and so the shadow moved, separating from the building quickly, smoothly and quietly.

He ran down the street taking advantage of all and any cover. He doubted that anyone would see, let alone challenge him but caution was an essential part of the game.

During the day he went by the name, Montgomery and wore the customary green of the Chimpanzee class but tonight he wore black. Not a criminal offence by any means but unusual enough that if anyone should see, it might arouse unwelcome suspicion. He was being cautious, more so than usual. Normally he worked only for himself but tonight he acted for someone very important and he didn’t intend to get caught.

He paused at an intersection, checked his bearings then sprang into the air, grabbing an overhanging ledge and pulling himself up a level. He crouched unmoving in the welcome shadows, studying the house he needed to infiltrate. A light was still on which meant the occupant was probably still awake.

Theft was uncommon in Ape City, crime was for the most part petty, a fruit from a market stall, a drunken brawl in the Gorilla section or at the very worst a crime of passion. For the most part the Apes were too sensible to contemplate committing offences against each other. Even so, important buildings like museums and art galleries were guarded. Like all societies there was always some element that was never satisfied with what they had or felt the destruction of a treasured piece of art would help drive home some political message.

Montgomery liked to feel he had a conscience. If there were six oranges to be had he’d only take two. If he needed a new tunic he’d steal just the one and not the whole shop. He knew the things he did were far from right but it was so much easier than working for a living. He only took what he needed and only from those who could spare it. It didn’t make him a good citizen but it did allow him to sleep at night.

Tonight however was an exception. Tonight the item he sought was of no interest or use to him at all. By Aldo, he wouldn’t even profit from the work... but he would remain free.

If he failed to procure that which his employer desired he faced incarceration, probably for a long time.

His head jerked up as the light in the house winked out. In just a moment he’d move closer and establish the level of security but he would not attempt to enter until he was reasonably sure the occupant was asleep. He slipped off the ledge and landed silently onto the road. He sprinted, reached the house in seconds, ducked into the shadows and looked around quickly but found no witness to his activities.

He craned his head and just as expected the house had no glass in any of its windows [only the most expensive ever did]. There were simple shutters that could be lashed down in the rare event of bad weather but like most of the population the occupant left the house open to any who might care to enter - invited or otherwise. The front door was no doubt unlocked too but he preferred to use a window. He planted his paws on the ledge and gracefully swung himself inside the house.

He didn’t stand still for a moment but quickly rolled into a dark corner and knelt there allowing his eyes to adjust to the different level of darkness. The large cavernous room was clean and simple with no clutter to stumble over. Pictures hung on the wall, an unusual number of maps, evidently the owner was a traveller.

He quickly counted the doors leading off from the room, one was obviously the kitchen, another a bathroom and the third would be a bedroom where the occupant now slept oblivious to his unwelcome visitor. Montgomery stood and searched the room finding nothing that resembled that which he was looking for. He sighed, nothing was ever easy. If it was as important as it was reputed to be he knew where he would find it...

In the bedroom.
With a shrug he crossed the room, placed his ear upon the wooden door and smiled at the sound of snoring coming from the other side. He lifted the catch silently and edged it open. Peeking inside he could see a shape on the bed. The sheet was thrown back but the owner was clearly asleep. Montgomery craned his neck and studied the room. Clothes hung neatly, books rested on shelves and more maps adorned the walls. He grinned.

A rucksack sat on a table.

He pushed open the door quietly and slipped inside. He glided past the bed and closed his hand upon the rucksack. It was heavy and there was a panic attack moment when he nearly dropped it. He lifted the bag and retreated.

Back in the main living room he opened the rucksack and rummaged around inside. A few tools tumbled out, a compass, a telescope and then he found a package wrapped in cloth and bound with string. He pulled it out weighing it in his hand.

This was it. This was what he had come for. Still, he'd better be sure.

He pulled off the string and unwrapped the parcel. He stepped over to the window allowing the moonlight to fall upon it and studied it with curiosity.

It was a book, a very, very old book. Some of it crumpled away with the merest touch of his fingers and he hoped he hadn't damaged it in his rush. He carefully turned some pages, and saw that most, but not all of it was unreadable. He squinted at the tiny text and was surprised to see that it wasn't hand written, it was... it was... He shrugged. He didn't now what it was but it certainly wasn't hand written. Too tiny and too neat.

He closed the book and examined the cover. His finger traced the remains of some gold lettering almost faded to nothing. "L.B.L."

" Hibble? What in the name of The Lawgiver was an hibble?"

He pulled a face. It wasn't his concern. It didn't look too important to him and he didn't understand how it could be worth all this fuss - but who cared. He had it and he would pass it on. He re-wrapped the ancient book and tucked it into his shirt. On the way over to the window he grabbed an orange, turned and saluted the unseen occupant in the bedroom beyond then exhaled himself back out onto the street.

2: Politician

A stately looking Orangutan paused at the entrance to the park and searched through the small crowd. He found the Chimpanzee that he had cause to conduct a distasteful business with sitting upon a park bench soaking up the rays of the sun. He watched him yawn as though he might need to catch up on some sleep, while around him, children, watched by their mothers played on the trimmed grass. The Orangutan gestured to the two Gorillas that flanked him either side and they moved away, trying to look inconspicuous. Satisfied, the Orangutan then approached the Chimpr and coughed into his hand to announce his arrival.

The Chimpr glanced lazily over his shoulder, finding amusement in the way the waiting Orangutan struggled to hide how uncomfortable he felt.

"Relax," said the Chimpr, "The art of being inconspicuous lies in not trying."

The other ape grunted irritably. "Of that I have no doubt that you are correct, I however have no knowledge of such things and would gladly keep it so."

Montgomery grinned. "Archimedes... why not sit down and take the mess off your feet."

The Orangutan hesitated, clearly offended, then sat down on the same bench as Montgomery.

"Do you have it?" He asked curtly.

"Of course."

"Then give it to me."

Montgomery reached into an inside pocket and pulled out the cloth wrapped book, holding it out but sniffing it back just before the Orangutan could grab hold of it.

"Our agreement?" He asked.

Archimedes sniffed. "The agreement stands."

"No tricks."

"The words of Orangutans are not laced with tricks."

This time Montgomery allowed the Orangutan to snatch the parcel away. He watched as his companion untied the string and peeked inside.

"What's an hibble?" Montgomery asked.

Archimedes visibly stiffened. He looked up shocked. "You've examined it?" he gasped, horrified.

Suddenly Montgomery felt uneasy. His eyes flicked left and right. Two gorillas, so obviously policemen they may have well carried placards announcing the fact, were trying to act natural over by the lake. No doubt they would be on him in an instant should the Orangutan wish it.

"Not examined, no." He added, quickly correcting his foolishness. "But I had to make sure it was the item you described."

The Orangutan stared into his eyes, doubting the truth of his words and then relaxed. "Do not concern yourself with it."

He said gruffly, "Your part is done, forget about this... and I'll forget about you."

Montgomery nodded and raised his palms in surrender.

"Okay, okay, just curious, that's all i'd never heard the word."

Archimedes stood, anxious to be elsewhere. "Forget about it Montgomery, I urge you!"

He turned on his heel and leaving the baffled Chimpr scratching his head, waddled away.

The cloak and dagger nonsense was not a part of his duties that Archimedes enjoyed. He found lying with criminals and low lives unpleasant in the extreme but knew that on occasion, it was unavoidable. The public didn't know Archimedes, he could go places and do things his superior could not. In return he was allowed certain privileges, one of which was access to the secret scrolls. He knew what the book was, he knew where it was from and he knew it had to be destroyed.

After a short walk through the streets of the city he quickly reached his destination. He dismissed the two Gorillas who marched away, happy to be relieved from babysitting another mincing politician.

Archimedes entered the institute of Science and went immediately to the Chambers of Dr Zaius...

3: Keeper of the Faith

Dr. Zaius scrawled his name onto a sheet of parchment and transferred it to another tray. The Hunt club was once again lobbying for permission to venture deeper into the Forbidden Zone in an effort to curb the explosion in the human population that threatened them all. The Scarecrows, a compromise, erected two months ago had worked for a while, keeping the vermin inside the boundaries where they belonged. But already they had grown used to the silent sentinels and stern measures were now required as they foraged ever deeper into Ape farmland, ruining crops wherever they trod.

These were troubling times in which Zaius found himself. Something was driving the humans out of the Forbidden Zone and Urus, acting independently had already dispatched two scouts to find out what. When they returned their debriefing would have to be very carefully monitored.

At last Zaius had bowed to public pressure and allowed the Hunt clubs to extend their activities but not so much that they would ever find anything... unusual.

Of course the Chimpanzees would be up in arms about the increased slaughter of the parasites but that was inevitable.

Zaius groaned and massaged his temples with his fingers.

The Chimpanzees! Always Chimpanzees. Life would be so much easier without them. And so much less interesting. He glanced at the latest list of known troublemakers, all of them, without exception, over-inquisitive. Zira and her animal rights activities. Percival and his theories of evolution, Zira and her domesticated human project and now two new names to be added to the list.

There was a knock on his door.

"Enter" he called.

Archimedes poked his head around the door. "Your Excellency."

"Ah Archimedes, what news do you bring? Only good I hope."

Archimedes nodded and held up the cloth wrapped artefact.

Zaius breathed a sigh of relief and glanced once more at the first of the new additions to the list of dissidents. 'Excellent... Now send for Cornelius if you please.'
4: Archaeologist.

Cornelius waited miserably in the corridors of the Institute of Science. He needed to use the bathroom yet again, or did he? He was so nervous he had spent most of the morning pondering that very question.

He had been summoned by Dr Zaius! He was done for. He just knew it and because someone had broken into his house he had nothing with which to defend his recent actions, no shred of proof to back up his unpopular theories.

It was over... he was going to spend the rest of his life in jail.

Another Chimpanzee sat opposite looking equally forlorn and Cornelius was just about to introduce himself when the sound of his name being called stopped his heart.

This was it.

He was going to die.

The other Chimpanzee shot him a look of sympathy as he stood and followed the usher. Trembling he stepped into the private chamber of Dr Zaius and there he was. Sitting behind his desk, working quietly.

"Close the door" Dr Zaius said without even looking up. Cornelius watched his hand trembling wildly as his fingers closed around the handle and pushed the door shut. He wanted to sit but dared not, at least not until Zaius suggested it.

At last the Orangutan looked at him and Cornelius found he could not meet, let alone hold his gaze.

Zaius leaned back into his chair and read from a piece of parchment.

"It says here... that you decided to exceed your travel permit and go off wandering into the Forbidden Zone... that you unlawfully explored, mapped and studied regions, specifically that of the Great Sea, which you were explicitly instructed not to... That not only did you take upon yourself to bring back souvenirs of your abominable actions but also that in accord with civil law you failed to declare or surrender them upon your return..."

Cornelius swallowed noisily but said nothing.

"Why Cornelius? Why can you not act like the scientist you aspire to be, instead of the idiot it seems you are?"

"I..." Cornelius began - but Zaius cut him off.

"I’ve heard your arguments Cornelius, they are nonsense. Not only are they nonsense they are blasphemous and unlawful not to mention insulting. Did you really think that by blatantly disobeying your superiors you would somehow win support for your ridiculous fairy tales?"

"I..." Cornelius began again

And now I learn, to my utter disbelief that you intend to present your... evidence, at a public meeting before presenting it to the Council?"

Zaius stared icily at the miserable Chimpanzee. "Well? Have you nothing to say?"

Cornelius swallowed hard. "Sir, Your Excellency, it was not my desire to commit a crime but I had no choice. Only by committing this offence could I possibly avert a greater one."

"Zaius pulled a face. "A greater offence? And what might that be?"

"The suppression of knowledge sir! I don’t seek to blaspheme... merely present the truth."

Zaius exploded, his fury making the Chimpanzee start and visibly waver. "That the Ape evolved from the Human? Pah! So your ambition is to see your society turn itself upside down. To see our City burn, to see order lost and chaos reign." Zaius knew that what he said was nonsense but he was counting on the Chimpanzee being so rattled that he wouldn’t question the lack of logic. "Is it your intention to see the Lawgiver fall from grace? The scrolls burn? The churches crumble?"

The Chimpanzee looked horrified and shook his head furiously.

"Then why do you persist in these reckless actions? Tell me, do you still intend to present your evidence... Even without Council approval?"

"Cornelius bowed his head. "No sir, The truth is I cannot, I’ve lost it.”

"Lost it?" exploded Zaius slamming his fist on the desk.

"That is... I believe it was stolen sir."

"Stolen? So you now suggest that there are thieves among us to account for your stupidity? I suppose you will also claim, should this come to a judicial hearing, that you were forced toward the Forbidden Ocean at gunpoint?"

"Cornelius was too confused to reply. Every time he opened his mouth it made things worse. Zaius sighed and shook his head.

"Cornelius... it has been recommended by some that I have you shot without trial! This was a lie of course, other than Archimedes no other soul even knew about the matter but it was worth it, just seeing the effect it had was enough. The Chimpanzee would now do as he was told and be too frightened to raise the matter again. It was time to soften up.

"However, I am of the opinion there is something within you that is worth preserving..."

Zaius reached for a parchment and began to write upon it.

"You are a young ape Cornelius, perhaps more foolish than most but I do not believe your soul is black and evil."

"It is not Sir, I assure you!"

Dr Zaius silenced the Chimpanzee with a curt wave of his hand. "I have the authority to turn a blind eye to your recent foolishness and at my discretion you might even be allowed to retain your freedom. But... I never want to have you here in this office again... Do I make myself clear? Forget your vile theories Cornelius, channel your energies into something productive instead. I understand you have a gift for map making?"

Cornelius said nothing.

"Your travel permit is hereby revoked and you will say nothing of this matter to anyone, ever... is that understood?"

Cornelius sighed with relief, it looked like he was going to live to see another dawn after all. He nodded.

"Then get out."

"Yes sir... and thank you Sir."

Dr Zaius had already turned his attention back to his scrolls and parchments, the meeting was over, miraculously Cornelius had survived and so he left as fast as he could. He hurried down the corridor, past the other, miserable, still waiting Chimpanzee and gave him a wink of encouragement. A few more steps and he was out in the street.

The sunlight and the breeze, two things he thought he might never experience again, were there to greet him.

5: Scientist

After the door had closed Zaius sighed heavily and pulled the cloth wrapped book from where he had hidden it in the drawer of his desk. He unwrapped the parcel and studied the ancient artefact from a mercifully forgotten age.

He knew what it was. He knew a long eroded "B", and an "E", he knew where he had not observed the destruction of examples far better preserved than this. He knew where it came from and what it represented.

He snarled, the sound so full of disgust and naked emotion that he startled himself with the ferocity of it. He stood and took four steps over to the burning fire.

He glanced at the book again, few words were decipherable after so many years of erosion but one in particular caught his eye.
"Amen" he said softly as he allowed the book fall into the flames.

He returned to his desk and once again studied the list of Chimpanzee dissidents. He read the latest report and shook his head in dismay. "A flying machine!" he moaned aloud. He stood shaking his head in wonder and opened the door to his office. "Archimedes!" he called angrily. "Bring that other idiot to my office immediately."

Archimedes stood and hurried to the corridor where the second Chimpanzee still waited anxiously.

"Dr Millo!" He called. "Dr Zaius will see you now."

WORDS: Dave B
ART: Ian Ward
music part comics, damn trendy & irreverent. It had been put together by two 2000AD artists Brett Ewins & Steve Dillon (he of Preacher fame). Deadline’s feature character was Tank Girl created by Jamie Hewlett who of course is better known these days for his work on Gorillaz.

So Brett, Steve, Jamie, Phil Bond and I think Matt Brooker were all staying away when I shuffled up to them and handed them a script and a sheaf of comic pages for a strip called Downtown about a crap private detective and his shifty female side-kick that I’d created with artist Steve Pugh.

I’d met Steve via a self-published comic he’d produced called Eat-in Or Takeaway. I gave him a call, we met up, got absolutely sozzled & have been fast friends ever since. As you may have noticed by now beer plays a big part in all of this!

Anyway, we gave the script and artwork to Brendan & Steve Dillon. They read it on the train back to London and gave us a call. They wanted to run the strip and did we have any more? ‘Yes’ we lied and thus history was made.

We actually only did one other strip for Deadline before Steve was headhunted by First Comics in the US to draw their sci-fi comic Grinjack.

Dave Elliot, a UK comic artist who was acting as sort of UK liaison for Dark Horse Comics in the States, saw our two Deadline strips & arranged for them to be reprinted in the anthology title Dark Horse Presents. On the strength of this I was offered a Terminator mini-series & so began my comic writing career. I’ve been writing twelve years full time and before that, seven part time.

So, must you be a millionaire by now?

What! Smithers release the hounds!

Were you a Marvelite or did you follow the distinguished competition or (heaven forbid) both?

I was a big Marvel fan simply because I don’t think there were any UK reprints of DC comics during the 1970s. You could pick up actual American issues of DC & Marvel comics from the newsagents – they came over as ballast in the holds of freighters – but there was no continuity to them. You had to trawl the neighbourhood, touring sweetshops & tobacconists for and wide on your Chopper bike, trying to piece together your collection.

There was always one kid at school who’d been away to Cornwall or somewhere similar on holiday and found a little newspaper shop that had a virgin stock of Fantastic Four or The Avengers, almost all in sequence. Naturally we beat him quite mercilessly.

My first induction into the halls of Marveldom were via the reprints of The Incredible Hulk & The Avengers in the pages of What If? Pow & (I think) Smash. You had these cool superhero strips running alongside the eccentric English genius of Leo Baxandale’s The Swats & The Blobs, Bizarre.

The proper UK reprints of the Marvel comics were a revelation. Jack Kirby drawing the comic book operetta of The X-Men, The Fantastic Four, The Mighty Thor & The Avengers. Steve Ditko’s elegant surreal work on Spider-Man, Pottas, John Buscema & Barry Windsor Smith doing basically the comic book equivalent of Wagner in Conan the Barbarian.

With a few exceptions in the years to come, I don’t think comics have ever had such a profound effect on me as they did back then.

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Do you recall the original UK Marvels, including Planet of the Apes and if so, what are your memories of them?

I remember not being remotely impressed by the adaptation of the first Apes movie. I really didn't like the art (George Tuska) and was starting to get annoyed with the hop-hazard way Marvel UK just arbitrarily chopped the story into chunks to fill the six or eight page虚弱 slot it had allocated for each episode. However, when they ran Beneath the Planet of the Apes, drawn by Alfredo Alcala, I changed my tune. It was a lovely piece of work and I was hooked.

After that, what sticks in my mind was that gloriously mad and extravagant story drawn by Tom Sutton. It had these vast galleons all lashed together into one giant island with a kind of Leonardo Da Vinci Ape living at the top of a huge tower formed from the bound prous of the ships. It was an epic flight of fantasy and actually heavily influenced me when I came to write my own take on Planet of the Apes almost thirty years later.

The Ploog and Sutton stuff appeared during a period in the 1970s when Marvel US were putting out the mind expanding exploits of Jim Starlin's Warlock & the darkly surreal Howard the Duck by Steve Gerber. I've since heard that this was also the time when a lot of drugs were floating around the offices, so make of that what you will.

Back in the UK, the sublime slid inexorably into the downright ridiculous when the POTRA comic started to run reprints of Marvel's updated take of War of the Worlds but pasted Ape faces over the Martian heads and called Killraven, the hero. Apeslay de looking back on it now it makes me chuckle at how bad it is. In fact, in a perverse way, it's so bad, it's brilliant!

How did you get the gig to do the Dark Horse Planet of the Apes run?

Phil Amara, who had been my editor on several projects at Dark Horse simply asked if I'd be interested in pitching for the Apes gig? He didn't have to ask twice!

I'd worked on a lot of film & TV licensed material by then and so was quite aware of the pitfalls involved. The only problem was that there was such secrecy surrounding the film that he didn't know much about it himself and what little he did know he wasn't allowed to disclose.

The only scrap I could throw me was that the Apes wore armour and didn't carry guns. Remembering the old Tom Sutton and Mike Ploog strips, I came up with a simple one line idea...Imagine Akira Kurosawa's film 'Ran' on the Planet of the Apes.

By this I'd envisaged great Apes armies in elaborate armour that wouldn't look out of place in feudal Japan. Fluttering coloured banners sticking up from cones on the backs of the warriors' armours as they wielded swords, pike staffs & crossbows. I think more by luck than judgement, I hit the nail on the head & I got the job.

Do you have any influence over who the artists are going to be on your stories and how important do you think the art is to any given story?

The artists were already part of the package when I signed on. On licensed material, choice of artists usually rests with the comic book company and the film or TV company. You are work for hire, whateve you do belongs to the film TV or comic book company, and of story. If they want things changed, no matter how nonsensical they're changed. You're pretty much at the bottom of the ladder when it comes to decision making. There's still plenty of scope to have some fun though.

Sometimes it can be a pain in other ways. In the past, there have been several toys made based on characters & creatures I devised for various strips & I've not seen a penny from them but you go into these things with your eyes open. It also gives you a great opportunity to play with some of the coolest characters around.

What did you think of Tim Burton's Re-Imagining of Planet of the apes?

Tim Burton has fabulous visual sense. In all his films, he has a single minded, idi-synronatic vision. Sometimes it's enough to carry a film, other times it's not. Apes almost makes it but not quite. Having said that, I'd rather have his Apes film than none at all.

In the early days, when talk of a new Apes film was being bandied about, Arnold Schwarznegger's name was mentioned in
of reaching that world (or perhaps one of his descendants did) & then they landed on Earth's past, when men were little more than apes. themselves, they would have an entire world to colonise before Leo arrived. Does that make any sense? See what I mean about it being convoluted?

Personally, I'd like to expand on the Apes world itself, see more cities, have Buddhist temples of Man-like mountain Gorillas and so. We could discover that there were descendants of the Oberon's crew living on an island because the Apes don't like water. We could also find that there are native inhabitants of the planet, sort of that world's equivalent of the mutants in the original movies who are not well pleased at the Apes taking over the prime ecological niche. There are plenty of ideas to be had, it's just a question of convincing those nice people over at Fox to make a sequel!

Your many credits, include the X-Men. Do you have any thoughts as to what makes the X-Men so special? Do you remember the Chris Claremont and John Byrne run?

The X-Men works because it's intrinsically a soap-opera. It's about being an outsider and feeling the world doesn't understand you. More specifically, it's about being a teenager and a male teenager at that, which is how Stan Lee envisioned it back in the 60's.

Since the 50's, in America especially, the teenager had become a new market demographic. Creating superheroes that weren't about millionnaire bachelors or god-like aliens from other worlds - but that actually spoke to young people was a stroke of genius. By having the exploits of 'real' people set in the real world it made the comics and their characters accessible in an entirely new way.

By the time Claremont & Byrne came along, the book had started to run out of steam. They gave it a new lease of life, re-energised it's soap opera roots and gave the characters a darker feel most notably Jean Grey becoming Phoenix and of course Wolverine, who really came into his own during their time.

Unfortunately they were a victim of their own success and the expanding X-line of titles virtually collapsed under the weight of their own contrived continuity. The recent shake-up at Marvel has once again breathed new life into the characters and more importantly made them accessible to people who haven't read comics in years, if ever. Of course, the main reason this has been done is to try and capture a new audience in the wake of the X-Men or Spider-Man movies but this isn't necessarily a bad thing.

Who are your all time favourite writers and artists in the comics world and why?

Good how long have you got? Writers, well Alan Moore naturally. Greg Rucka, Brian Azzarello, Warren Ellis.

---

Dan Abnett, Grant Morrison, Mark Millar, Neil Gaiman, all the usual suspects.

Artists, hmm, Steve Pugh, Matt Brooker aka I'Arri, Bryan Hitch, Mike Mignola, Steve Yeowell, Jaime Hernandez, Paul Rivoche, Alan Davis. I could go on and on.

As to why? Well it's because they're good at what they do, pure and simple. They hold my attention & keep me entertained. Like it or not, comics are part of the entertainment industry. We expect people to pay money for what we put down on paper and the reader wants to feel that his or her purchase has been justified.

Had you prepared scripts for future issues of the Dark Horse comic? If so, can you tell us anything about them (or indeed, copy them to us for serialisation)?

I personally felt that the relationship between Esaü and Seneca was getting into a really solid and interesting story and I was really looking forward to seeing how things developed. I was, to put it mildly, disappointed when Dark Horse cancelled their Apes run.

Dan Abnett & I who were co-writing the regular series at the time, were going to spend a year following the adventures of Ritter, Esaü, Seneca & Crow Jane across Ape world before leading them ultimately to the discovery of Piri.

However, when it soon became evident that the film wasn't doing as well as was hoped, Mike Richardson, the head of Dark Horse Comics, decided to pull the series there & then. For a while there was talk about starting a new series set on the classic movie Ape world, so Dan and I came up with a way of relocating our heroes from the Burton Ape world to the classic movie Ape world.
It involved some ideas I mentioned earlier. Our heroes find the aged Ari who, after her encounter with Leo had sought out and joined up with the descendants of the Oberon's crew who had elected to explore their new home instead of staying behind with the others at the downed space station.

These humans still had all their forebears' technology, including active computers and space pods. However, over the course of the series, Ari's grandson and later one of Thade's heirs, had been tweaking our heroes and finally followed them down to this town populated by technologically advanced humans and their ape servitors. As the ape army laid siege to the town, the only way out was for our heroes to use the pods. You can see what's coming next can't you.

They escape in the pods and shift sideways through space/time, eventually landing on the classic movie era Planet of the Apes. We went then pick up the story from there. The plot may have holes in it you could drive a bus through but I think overall it could have worked. Alas, now we'll never know.

How disappointing was that sudden cancellation for you as writer?

It was very disappointing when the axe finally fell. I realise it had a lot to do with economics and the comic had to make money but I still believe there's a market for a good Planet of the Apes comic out there, whether the Burton version or the classic movie canon. People were so hyped when they heard about Tim Burton's film because, like you, me and the folks reading this, Apes played a big part in nurturing my interest in science fiction. For some of us of a certain age, (on the thirtieth side of forty) the science fiction film blockbuster didn't start with Star Wars. It was the Apes canon which broke that ground.

The films, the TV series, the cartoon series, the novels, the toys all the merchandising you can imagine began with the Apes films. I feel that cancelling not only the comic book series but also ruling out the prospect of ever doing anymore doesn't give the Apes canon the credit and respect it deserves.

This issue of Scrolls is a comics special. Many readers of Scrolls have talents both on the writing and art side of things and they'd love to hear your tips on how best to get a break in the industry.

It's hard, so don't give up your day job. Seriously. For seven years I worked as magazine editor for an environmental trust & later RoSPA (the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents), editing amongst other things the Tufty Club road safety magazine. The Tufty Times. I wrote during the day, came home had something to eat, then wrote again into the wee small hours, sending off pitches and generally making a nuisance of myself to various editors both here and abroad.

I think the main thing to do is get something in print, whether it's self-published, small press, whatever. It's show's that you have the commitment and whether you have the talent or not. The only way to become a better writer is by writing. The same goes for being an artist. You can always learn more, always improve. It's an on-going process, take it from me! If you want to be a comic book writer, don't only read comics. All you'll end up doing is regurgitating someone else's style.

It's good to have influences but do other things too, watch films, go to the theatre, read books. I'll say it again: READ BOOKS. Not just sci-fi or horror but literature, biographies, old dictionaries and reference books, a great source of strange but true information. Store it all up, keep notes, scribble down ideas, snippets of dialogue, names of people and places, you never know when you'll need them. I often refer to note books I kept ten years ago. So much can be recycled, they're invaluable.

The way I broke in was by collaborating with an artist. This gives a writer a distinct advantage as editors are loathe to wade through pages and pages of script sent in on spec by an unknown.

By giving them a finished piece of work, a short piece at that, they can see what your dialogue, story-telling and pacing are like and what to improve and where.

Most of the publishers these days have submission guidelines on-line and I know that Dark Horse were recently, actively pursuing new creators so there are opportunities to be had. I recommend reading the following: Artists On Comic Art & Writers On Comic Writing both by Mark Salisbury, published by Titan books. Story by Robert McHed published by Methuen & On Writing by Stephen King published by NEL (New English Library).

So, if you want an anti-social lifestyle where you're stuck indoors on sunny days, where you pace around the room talking to yourself to make sure your dialogue sounds just right and where your back and eyesight are messed up from hunching over the keyboard all day then welcome to the club, glad to have you aboard.

Many thanks Ian, as well as being a comics legend across the board, you're also an incredibly friendly and helpful guy with a truly simian soul.

Mine's a pint!

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issue #2 out now!
Brown Watson's PLANET OF THE APES ANNUALS

Throughout the vast universe of memorabilia collecting there is no tradition more uniquely British than that of the great hardback annual – in no other country could you possibly find so many books released to celebrate the wonders of such legendary television programmes as 3-2-1 and Duncan Dares. It seems that this is one joy that our friends across the pond largely missed out on, yet it’s a tradition that continues to this very day. Planet of the Apes was no exception to this phenomenon and the three annuals produced in the UK by Brown Watson are proving to be almost as popular a target for collectors now as they were for school kids quarter of a century ago.

The tradition of the hardback annual, while around since much earlier, rose in popularity in the 1960s and 1970s as TV became more prominent and has been a mainstay of holiday season ever since. Wherever there was a hot property in TV, film, sport or pop music there was an annual to cash in on the craze. Often there would be annuals published relating to perennially popular comic characters too – Spider-man, Superman, Batman and the Fantastic Four have all at one stage or another decorated the shelves of newsagents (and now charity shops and memorabilia fairs).

Packed full of comic strips, text stories, puzzles, games and so on, these books were generally released during the summer months as an aid to parents wishing to keep their kids quiet during the holidays. It was not uncommon for annuals to also appear towards the end of the year as stocking-stuffer material in the event of Santa Claus running out of ideas.

Like any number of other popular television programmes, Planet of the Apes received this treatment and proved to be startlingly popular (although the films were covered, the emphasis was definitely on the then-popular TV series). For a television series of just fourteen episodes Planet of the Apes managed an incredible feat in having seen three annuals hit
bookshops between 1975 and 1977, all published in London by Brown Watson. By comparison, the similarly short-lived science fiction TV spin-off *Logan's Run* was also licensed to Brown Watson but saw just one book published.

What is interesting about the UK annuals is that while often British publications were little more than reprints of US material with one or two fillers thrown in, the *Planet of the Apes* annuals brought entirely new material to the lucky fans in the UK. Marvel UK's comic had the occasional exclusive in terms of the odd piece of new art, the infamous *Apeslayer* strip and a string of new covers but it was Brown Watson's series of annuals that first gave the UK fans their first glimpse of exclusively British strips.

Without wishing to offend fans of join-the-dots puzzles and colour-in pictures, it is these new comic strip adventures that are the main reason that the annuals have become so collectable. But there are a number of reasons that, despite being aimed at the child market, these annuals are becoming ever more sought after:

- While the Marvel UK comics have become more collectable in recent years, the all-new nature of these strips mean that the books have become sought after both on their home soil and by *Apes* fans overseas who missed them first time around.
- The format of the UK annual is unusual when compared to some of the publications overseas — while there are similar collections of comic strips released, there are relatively few US publications that combine the strips with filler material in the hardback format enjoyed by so many UK publications.
- Although there are other rare exceptions, these annuals are the primary source of the very few comic strips to be published based on the TV series — with movie adaptations, movie spin-offs and the bizarre all-new concoctions of Marvel's US magazine and the later Adventure Comics series, it is easy to forget about the TV series when it comes to comic strip adventures. But with all new comic stories based on the *Planet of the Apes* franchise being a very popular aspect of the *Apes* memorabilia market among some collectors, these annuals remain the first stop for any fan seeking comic strip adventures based on Pete, Alan and Galen.
- The very fact that these books are primarily based on the TV series opens them up to a very specific area of *Apes* fandom — for those fans who prefer to collect memorabilia based on the TV series, these annuals are of far more interest than the
mountains of movie-related collectibles.

- The illustrated text stories – while not as popular as the strips, these stories are an interesting addition to the collection for similar reasons. Although there are George Alec Effinger’s series of books based on episodes of the TV series, these text stories offer rare all-new material for those fans hungry for more stories of the three fugitives. Their quality may reflect that they were aimed at the children’s market but they remain of interest all the same.

- Some of the artwork for the annuals was the work of John Bolton, nowadays a top illustrator in the field of comics, among other things. While his style has undoubtedly improved since these strips were drawn, his contributions (comic strips and illustrations) remain the standout feature of these annuals, eclipsing the other stories and offering better artwork than many of the more collectable Planet of the Apes comics.

While it’s fair to say that the comic strips are the main reason fans pick up these annuals, the filler material such as the puzzles, colouring in activities and so forth have all contributed to the value of these books... but usually in a negative way.

During some quiet holiday moment, a young child would have no qualms about picking up his or her Planet of the Apes annual and trying out a join-the-dot picture, colouring in another picture or two and perhaps cutting out one of the masks. For this reason and others (those who received an annual as a present from someone would perhaps have the price clipped or their name written inside) it is increasingly difficult to find a copy of any of these annuals in near mint condition.

Many years ago, I found a copy of the 1975 annual in a dusty old shop selling old books and comics and such things and dithered long and hard about whether a fiver was a fair price for this book that I had never heard of (I was into all things Planet of the Apes but was completely unaware of the annuals at this time).

I eventually decided to buy it – and it’s just as well. While the price of this particular item hasn’t risen all that much, annuals with none of the aforementioned defects are becoming increasingly hard to find. Nowadays a copy
of one of the rarer annuals (it would seem that the earlier the *Planet of the Apes* annual, the more common it is) with most of the puzzles filled in will cost you a similar price – to actually find one that isn't bashed and coloured in is difficult enough without even thinking about how much it might cost.

Nevertheless, the annuals are not that difficult to find from the usual places providing you are not fussy about such things – if you are searching for a good clean copy bearing none of the marks of a bored childhood holiday you'll do well to find a copy at all, never mind at a decent price. While the 1975 annual still appears to be the most common, neither this edition nor the latter two turn up in unused condition with any great reliability. But if you are after simply a reading copy with the strips intact, you won't have too much bother.

When looking at these annuals today, one has to look at them in context. There is no denying that this was very much a product aimed, like most of the *Planet of the Apes* memorabilia craze, at kids. As such, don't expect incredibly original or deeply complex stories. Likewise, if you're looking for the psychedelic tripped-out weirdness offered up by some of Marvel’s strips you'll be disappointed.

Even taking this into account, however, there are some genuinely interesting ideas in these strips, aside from the sheer novelty of having some all-too-rare comic strip action devoted to the TV series characters. They might not all be classics, but there is enough to make these annuals worth seeking out.

**1975**

“JOURNEY INTO TERROR”

“WHEN THE EARTH SHAKES!”

From a critical standpoint, the strips in the 1975 annual are the weakest of the three collections. Truly shoddy colouring, for a start, plagues both stories. This isn't exclusive to *Planet of the Apes* – pick up any *Topper* or *Beano* annual of the time and you're
as likely to see the same thing – but it does visually detract from what was only mediocre art to start with. The illustrator responsible for these strips eludes me but the art is patchy and does not exactly stick in the mind.

In fact, *Journey into Terror* has little to recommend it at all. Aside from the aforementioned artwork, the script appears to have been thrown together quickly without much thought at all. One would expect the dialogue to be very comic book-like in style, given the nature of the publication, but it just doesn’t seem very true to the characters either. But then again, perhaps the writer wasn’t over-familiar with the TV series anyway – the opening scenes of the strip seem to rely entirely on recycling the famous hunt scene from the original movie.

The plot does throw up one interesting twist in the all-humans-look-the-same vein. Alan and Pete are once again captured but this time it seems it was entirely by accident – the apes responsible were actually looking for two other human fugitives! The naming of the two fugitives seems like another moment of haste on the part of the writer – Stern and Lang? Far too twentieth century! Everybody knows names in the future should end with “ar”, “or”, “ro” or something like that.

Given that the story is as formulaic as the series it is based on (humans being oppressed by apes get rescued by our three fugitive heroes who set them on their way to a better life) the story has two other redeeming features. Firstly, the rescue doesn’t come down to some piece of twentieth century knowledge that only Alan and Pete know; and secondly it isn’t even Alan and Pete who do the rescuing!

*When the Earth Shakes!* is, if anything, a little too faithful to the TV series. In fact it borrows most of its story from various episodes. An earthquake lands the three fugitives in trouble (*The Trap*); a local prefect lets his humans indulge in a bizarre local ceremony to keep them happy (*The Gladiators*); that same prefect has a discussion with Galen about some unusual old artefacts he has found (*The Gladiators*); the presence of some old technology gives Alan and Pete some hope of perhaps finding that way home that they’re always looking for (*The Trap/The Legacy*); Pete and Galen have to risk danger to find medical help for a wounded Alan (*The Surgeon*); and humans are involved in a strange religious ceremony that owes more than a little to the dangerous technology of twentieth century man (*The Liberator*).

The story owes as much to formula as *Journey Into Terror*, but again there are a few interesting points of note. For one, the prefect of this village is an orangutan rather than the usual chimpanzee. There’s also a truly terrible pun that appears to be aimed at fans of psychedelic rock.

The story is let down in the end by a couple of factors. One is the
contrived nature of the conclusion – it seems a bit odd that when being chased the fugitives would jump into the wreckage of an old plane, effectively trapping themselves: it’s even more unlikely that the guns would still work after a thousand years!

The other disappointment is in the resolution of the story. In the end, the three fugitives destroy the plane, leaving the local humans devoid of their ceremony – whereupon these natives suddenly decide that it was just a machine after all, they acknowledge to the prefect that their religious beliefs were wrong and eventually the leader of the humans throws himself before the prefect begging forgiveness!

It all seems a little morally dubious to me. I couldn’t help thinking when I read this story... a couple of Americans beating up an old man because he tries to protect a holy relic of his sacred religion? I’m sure Eric Greene could get some mileage out of this one.

1976
“PIT OF DOOM”
“SHIP OF FOOLS”

The 1976 annual shows a marked improvement over its predecessor in terms of both story and art. Pit of Doom and Ship of Fools benefit from more talented illustrators in the form of Brit John Bolton and Swiss-born Oliver Frey respectively and some stories that demonstrate a little more thought, while not completely escaping the kiddie annual mould.

Pit of Doom is again a little formulaic – our astronaut friends stumble across more twentieth century technology (this time the underground ruins of a biological warfare facility), discover that it is still potentially dangerous and attempt to stop it falling into the wrong (i.e. ape) hands. On the surface it appears to be a retread of the TV episode The Legacy and while that’s possibly a fair assessment of the story it does the strip an injustice overall.

There are some unusual aspects, and some that don’t really stand up – for one thing the gorillas don’t appear to be too phased when they stumble across such a technologically advanced discovery (even demonstrating they know all about poison gas and the protective masks that need be worn). There is also a little irony when reading all the annuals in one sitting when, in Pit of Doom, Virdon seems to think that it’s asking too much for the weapons to still be active after all this time. Hmmm... didn’t bother that airplane a year earlier, did it?

The image of Galen as some kind of action hero perhaps doesn’t exactly sit too well with the character either – it’s hard to imagine Roddy McDowall’s pacifist chimp racing into danger armed with a gun, far less actually shooting a gorilla with it.

And here is one instance where the difference between TV series and spin-off annual is particularly obvious. It’s difficult to imagine the TV series being quite so bloodthirsty but it seems that in many cases the creators behind the annuals had no problem at all with the murder of gorillas, whether it be through gun shots or being burned alive. For a juvenile aimed book spun off from a family TV show the body count is actually surprisingly high.

Like the story before it, Ship of Fools carries some decent art, though not in the same league as Bolton. The artist responsible, Oliver Frey, was
and are prepared to do something about their situation, but this alone isn’t enough to lift the story out of mediocrity. The ending (cringeworthy joke aside) at least poses an interesting enigma – would the ship make it, and if so, what would they find? A country of Communist apes perhaps? Or maybe a Hawaiian paradise where apes perform Elvis tribute concerts nightly? The possibilities of a fan-fiction spin-off are endless.

“BLOW FOR BLOW”
“BREAKOUT”
“FROM OUT OF THE SKY”

If you’re going to pick up only one of these annuals, it has to be this one. For one thing, it carries three stories instead of the usual two. More importantly however, the stories and art on display in the three strips are easily the best on offer.

During the 1970s, after the initial run of the show had come to an abrupt end but in the days before home video, the art of John Bolton was one of the defining images of Apedom. This annual showcases what were probably his finest contributions. When one considers the awesome work on Marvel’s US magazine from the likes of Sutton, Ploog and Alcala it is no small feat that Bolton’s work on the strips (as well as his illustrations for the text stories) easily compares with the best from the other side of the pond.

Of the three stories on offer, only one actually appears in colour. This is easily forgotten though as the black and white strips showcase Bolton’s art even better than the colour strips. With his highly detailed linework no longer obscured by colour you can really appreciate the effort put in and the artistic ability of the man. Gorillas’ hair
bills in the wind, faces are more realistic and the characters look just like they should. The only difference here is Urko, who probably looks better than he did on TV! While Mark Lenard’s Urko was undoubtly a popular villain, he often came across as a bit of an idiot. Not so in Blow For Blow, where Bolton really does show him as a mean looking gorilla who will take no prisoners and quite easily kick your arse with time to spare.

It is Blow For Blow that is probably the most interesting story in the annual (and indeed in all three annuals). The major notable point is the complete absence of Alan, Pete and Galen. The story revolves entirely around Urko, Zaius and young gorilla soldier Jehan, a nasty piece of work on a par with anything offered by the TV series.

The story is exactly the sort that was covered all too briefly on the show – ape politics and power struggles. There is deceit and treachery around every corner – Jehan is trying to revolt in order to oust Urko; Zaius sees Jehan as a tool to keep Urko in check; and Urko is as bitter as one would expect towards both Jehan and Zaius. It is the sort of story that was not just rare for a publication like this, it could easily have been fleshe out into a groundbreaking episode of the TV series that would easily have trounced The Tyrant as far as power struggles and political machinations in Ape City go.

The character development is a match for anything the TV series ever attempted and the story finishes well, with the bitterness between each character still lingering and leaving us in no doubt that the relationship between Zaius and Urko is as shaky as ever.

Breakout, the only colour strip in the 1977 annual, is the weakest of the three in terms of the story but has some terrific art on display all the same. Bolton turns in another fine job and the colouring is probably the best colouring job of any of the annuals.

The story is only let down by once more becoming trapped in the formula of the TV series. Alan, Pete and Virdon find a village of humans – in fact a prison camp for human renegades (think Planet of the Apes meets Escape From New York) – demonstrate some
wonderful twentieth century knowledge and liberate them all.

The formulaic structure is not the only weakness. For one thing, the idea of a human prison camp is a little bit of a stretch. Firstly the TV series never exactly gave much hope of there being enough humans with the courage to rebel against the apes to actually merit filling up a camp with them. Secondly, the idea that these human renegades would be kept like this seems unlikely anyway, given how much certain apes would prefer just to kill them.

The final issue with this story is why Alan, Pete and Galen choose to help at all. It would seem that because the renegades are humans then they must surely be victims. In actual fact no attempt is ever made to discover why these humans are locked up like this – how do we know they aren’t all murderers?

These weaknesses, together with an ending that leaves you feeling the story isn’t quite finished, might make Breakout the least interesting story of this annual but thankfully a return to earlier form sees us finish the annual with the terrific From Out of the Sky.

From Out of the Sky sees the three renegades stumble across another crashed ship, with one survivor – a female astronaut named Verina who also happens to know Pete. The presence of other astronauts was something that the TV show only briefly hinted at but never elaborated upon, so again this is new territory. Even more interesting is that Verina holds the key to what Alan was always searching but never found in the space of fourteen episodes – a way back home.

Again Bolton’s art is terrific, and he has obviously being paying attention to details too – note that Verina’s astronaut outfit shows ANSA, the variation of NASA that was established in the original movie (also look closely at Verina’s uniform for a little in-joke courtesy of the artist). The same can’t be said of the writer however, who treads on a minefield of continuity arguments with lines like “We’re on Earth, baby... but 2000 years ahead” and “I’ll buy you dinner in 1990!”

The story and its conclusion (which, corny ending aside, is a pretty satisfying one) opens a can of worms that the TV series didn’t go near – can Verina reach the past? If she does, can she send help back for Pete and Alan? Or can she avoid apes taking over the planet altogether? The idea that in the end only one person can go back on the ship is a little contrived when it comes about, but you have to forgive this minor flaw when seen in
the context of the story – one of a couple of these stories that were probably far better than their intended audience were likely to see in most annuals.

It might not be a conclusion, but at least it offers the chance of a conclusion. Again it has broken new ground that the TV series did not manage to cover and, as the last adventures of our three favourite renegades, this story together with Blow For Blow gives the series a better ending than the cancelled show ever managed.

It should not be forgotten that Bolton contributed some quite stunning artwork to some of the illustrated text stories that appeared in these annuals as well, but overall it is the comic strips that are his greatest contribution. So if any of you are still plugging the gaps in your collection, make sure these annuals don’t escape your attention.

JOHN BOLTON – John has since become a top artist of the fantasy and horror genre. As well as the occasional exhibition of his work and some cracking book covers, he also continues to work in the field of comics where he still produces quality work for the likes of DC’s Books of Magic. In his time he has tackled many of the major characters including Batman and X-Men, as well as making his mark on a couple of other Twentieth Century Fox sci-fi franchises (see picture).

OLIVER FREY – Oliver, like John Bolton, continued to excel in the worlds of fantasy and carved out a niche in book illustrations, magazine covers and comics (including The Trigan Empire and one of his main inspirations, Dan Dare). He has made brief contributions to the movies (including some work on Superman) but probably achieved most prominence as a magazine cover artist – a generation of twenty-somethings will be familiar with his work on the covers of 8-bit computer magazines such as Crash and Zzap a decade ago.

BROWN WATSON – In 1979, Peter and Brian Babani, who were then bosses of the company, left in order to set up Grandreams, where they continued to publish annuals with great frequency. They took most of their licences with them, but by this time Apes fandom had gone into hibernation (at least it seemed so – see Jack Kirby article elsewhere in this issue for evidence to the contrary!) and Alan, Pete and Galen finally dropped off the radar until revived by television re-runs.
WANT TO PROVE JUST HOW MUCH OF A PLANET OF THE APES GEEK YOU ARE?

Now's your chance. You've now heard all about the highly detailed art of John Bolton. How does one achieve such realism? Well, using photos as reference material is useful enough – and that's obviously what Bolton did. So when you've finished revelling in the delights of these annuals, why not go back through them and see if you can spot Mr Bolton's sources or any other such trivial details. (But as far as this trainspotting-like talent goes, you'll be hard pressed to beat a certain fanzine editor, who shall remain nameless)

**Blow For Blow (1977)** – Bolton captures some wonderful Orang-utan poses in this story, particularly from Dr Zaius. Evidently he used both the film and the TV series though:

**1976 & 1977:** Evidently Bolton's pose of choice when getting a good beating!

**The Marksman (1976)** and a publicity photo from the back cover – hmmm.

**Galen's Guerillas (1976)** – and a little in-joke for Ron Harper fans and **Breakout (1977)** – both of which were based on a publicity still from **The Trap**.

**Blow For Blow (1977)** and a pin-up from the same annual. The same gorilla?

*Alan Maxwell (with John Roche)*
It has recently been brought to my attention by one of my subordinates that certain establishments in the Forbidden Zone are selling Planet of the Apes books aimed at the young teenage market. Anxious to find out whether it was aimed at the simian teenage market or more human propaganda I made my way to one such establishment and with ‘gentle’ persuasion I encouraged the human assistant to donate some copies to aid me in my investigation.

Published by Harper Entertainment (hopefully nothing to do with that despicable human, Virdon!) and written by John Whitman there are so far two books in the series - Force and Resistance. They are both set in the time period 12 years before the human ast-rot-aunm captain Leo Davidson crash landed on the ‘planet of the apes’, as you humans like to call it.

The apes are of course the civilised race while the human scum, for some inexplicable reason, are tolerated. The humans are made up of two tribes - the Tek's and the Wildings. Possibly this division was brought about when the human space station The Oberon first crash-landed on the planet. The ‘Tek’s choosing to remain in The Oberon and the ‘Wildings’ choosing to make their home in the wilderness.

Sarai is the leader of the Tek's and is the mother of Daena, that troublemaker that General Thade was to encounter in later years, and she was married to Karubi (who later gets his come upance at the hands of mighty Gorilla leader Attar). Sarai also has the misguided idea that humans are the equals of apes and the two should live together in peace. This dangerous viewpoint is utter nonsense and needs to be stamped out completely!

Attar is a young cadet at the academy under the leadership of General Krull and under the watchful eye of Colonel Thade. Attar is also good friends with the lovely Ari and who can blame him, she is very tasty indeed!

Force is the first book in the series and tells the story of an ape expedition to the old ruins of Hitek to investigate a gap in ape history known as the Dark Age. Senator Sandar, General Krull, Colonel Thade and high priest Timon plan the expedition.

But Ari, with the help of Attar, spies on the meeting in the attic of the senator’s house. Unfortunately the two friends fall from the attic and come crashing down in the middle of the meeting!

Attar should never have let that troublemaker Ari talk him in to helping her. Although she is very hot so you can understand why he does it!

Attar is made Sanitation officer for the expedition as punishment for his insubordination. How ridiculous to make a gorilla with the strength and power of Attar the digger of toilets! Ari disguises herself as a baggage handler so that she can go along with the expedition, determined to discover the secret of the Dark Age.

Savage humans attack the expedition and Attar bravely saves Timon the high priest from certain death using only his shovel. Attar gives it to the human filth in fine style and my only regret is that I couldn’t see it! They should have put a picture of Attar’s great handiwork in the book! Attar’s reward is to protect Ari, whose presence was discovered during the attack when she yelled out to warn Attar. Sandar is furious that his daughter has disobeyed him again but is forced to keep her with the party because it is safer than sending her back.

When they arrive at the ruins of Hitek the party make the grim discovery of the bodies of dozens of apes buried inside the wall of the chapel. Timon thinks that humans killed the apes but Ari is sceptical. Timon appears to be proved right when humans attack the camp and an ape soldier dies.

Ari runs away amid the confusion but she has contracted a fever and doesn’t get very far. She is helped by the human Sarai and her clan who give her a plant medicine called meeda to cure her fever. Ari realises that it was a plague which killed
the apes at Hitek, the same plague which she had also contracted but the needa has saved her life. While she is recovering Sarai takes advantage in the cowardly way only a human could by spreading her propaganda about apes and humans living together in peace. She even produces a parchment supposedly found by Timon at Hitek showing apes and humans working together at Hitek.

The parchment is obviously a fake as the idea of humans and apes as equals can be nothing more than a ridiculous human notion!

But Ari is fooled by the human lies and when she returns to the camp she tells her father of how intelligent the humans are and how their medicine can save the apes from the plague. As if apes would really need any help from humans? I won’t spoil the ending for you but it becomes a race against time to find the cure and save apekind!

The second book *Resistance* pays rather more attention than it should to the humans and their petty squabbles. But they are quickly put in their rightful place when the apes capture Daena and one of her friends, Pak.

Sarai sets out to rescue them and walks straight in to an ape patrol. These humans really are stupid and my hopes rose at this point in anticipation of a human execution! And I wasn’t to be disappointed as one of the idle humans is made an example of. The apes are getting the humans to build a temple with huge stones. The apes lower one of the massive stones on to the human, crushing him to death! Fantastic stuff but a picture would have made it so much better!

Things are really getting interesting here as the apes line up some more humans for execution, among them Sarai’s daughter Daena. But just as they are about to be executed Sarai pleads for Daena’s life and for some inexplicable reason the high priest agrees. His reason is that by sparing her life he can make Sarai and her clan work even harder. I suppose there is some logic in that but it does spoil the fun somewhat! But he redeems himself by executing the rest of the group. I like his style!

It’s at this point that we are introduced to Limbo, who has just started out in his career as human slave trader. And what a noble profession it is too! Humans - if you can’t kill them make them into slaves!!

Do-gooder Ari comes along and tries to help the human scum and tells Sarai that if they can escape out of the temple then she will help them get out of Ape City. Why she would betray her kind like that I just don’t understand?

Sarai foolishly believes that the humans can learn from the apes and she plans to build a human city when they get away from Ape City. But not to worry because Thade and Timon have their own plans for the humans as they plan to kill them as soon as the temple is finished. And quite right too! They will have served their purpose by then!

-So, will the humans escape or will the book have a happy ending and they all get crushed to death?? You inquisitive humans will just have to buy your own copy to find out!

It is rather disturbing that Colonel Thade doesn’t deal with Ari’s humanitarian phase in the proper manner. She may be cute but that shouldn’t get in the way of his mission to rid the planet of the human menace once and for all!

Perhaps this is the Colonel’s weakness and an early warning signal that a chimpanzee shouldn’t be in command of the might of the ape forces! But he does show nothing but contempt for the human scum, which is a good quality that a great leader like me could have nurtured had Thade been under my command!

The books are aimed at youngsters but I have to say that they make great entertainment for adults as well. And human adults are stupid anyway and have the intelligence of a child! There is plenty in there to give (false) hope for humans and do-gooder chimps but plenty of cruelty to humans to keep us real apes happy!

Very entertaining and highly recommended! And for the benefit of you humans who can’t read anyway they have very nice front covers!

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After much pleading, Uriko Unsworth has kindly allowed Scrolls to point out that there was a modest degree of help with the above review from his snivelling human slave, Roy Mitchell. Roy managed to scream at us before his latest whipping that the first two teen novels should still be available via Amazon.com or W.H. Smith online and that there are two further teen novels planned in the series.
The Ace Of Thade's

Tired of hearing wisecracks about monkey poo, Darren Stockford climbs out of a rapidly sinking Delta pod and takes a wide-eyed wander around Tim Burton's Planet Of The Apes

"You people can come up with all the theories you want to, but that had to be about the worst, most contrived ending in movie history" – Comment posted on Usenet, July 2001

"I like to f*** with people's heads" – Tim Burton, Empire Online, August 2001

Forget unwritten rules. The rule about not remaking classic movies is splashed in three-inch high letters across the front cover of every respected filmmaker's handbook. Turn to page two and you'll see "ignore rule one at your peril" written in four-inch high bold italic. Which is why it takes a very brave director to pick up a project like Planet Of The Apes.

Sure, the original 1968 version has its flaws, but certainly not many, and it's easy to overlook them when they're wrapped up in such an enthralling and intelligent story.

If the old adage about perfection being impossible to achieve is true, then Franklin Schaffner's Planet Of The Apes is probably about as close as we're ever going to get. It's the Wizard Of Oz of sci-fi movies – an endlessly re-watchable fairytale that seems to mature with age, rather than simply date.

With this in mind, it's easy to see why Tim Burton insisted on calling his film a "re-imagining". It gave him the leeway to make a different kind of Apes film, one that would (hopefully) deflect direct comparisons with the '68 version.

Ha. He'd be lucky.

Rather than dampening the flames of expectation, the "re-imagining" quote seemed to fan them.

In recent years, films with twist or shock endings had become almost de rigueur. And knowing that the original Planet Of The Apes had one of the best final reels of all time, the question on everyone's lips was: how was Burton going to top the Statue of Liberty?

All kinds of theories were being thrown about – Thade retrieving Leo's sunken pod and using it to travel back to Earth's past (does Thade even know about it? He saw the damaged trees, not the pod itself); Leo slipping into a parallel universe (pah, much too easy); our hero's time-travelling activities having consequences back on Earth (hmm, a bit vague).

Which, if any, of these theories was the 'right' one? Burton was remaining tight-lipped. When Empire Online interviewed him, he was defiant and unapologetic. Would he explain the ending if they asked him very, very nicely?

"No. I've always resented the literalisation of society, the conformity. You very early on realise that it's all a load of crap, I mean, what's conformity, what's normalcy? It just diminishes people and puts them in categories, and I hate that."

Riiight.

Actually, by this point, I'd started to enjoy the mystery of it all. I liked the fact that it was getting so many people riled up. Watching virtual fights break out over the ending of a Planet Of The Apes film was quite heart-warming. It meant that people cared about this material. After all, if you don't like a film, you just leave the theatre and forget about it; you file it in the bad movie trashcan and move on to some place else.

But that hadn't happened with Burton's movie. People wanted answers. Nay, they demanded answers. It was the new "who is Keyser Soze?", or "is Deckard a replicant?" – though unlike The Usual Suspects and Blade Runner,
POTA 2001's entire reputation seemed to be resting on whatever explanation could logically be used to explain its final scene. And it's here that the unfairness seems to lie.

For my money, Tim Burton's Planet Of The Apes is an enjoyable film – one that deserves far more critical evaluation than an endless discussion about how strange the ending is. There's another 110 minutes of film that hardly get a look in.

Mention the name Burton in the context of Apes on Internet discussion lists, and chances are you'll get a load of wisecracks at best, and sneering at worst. Reasoned debate is futile, and I think that's a real shame.

By writing this piece for Simian Scrolls, I'm hoping to redress the balance a bit. I'm also kind of hoping that it will encourage more fans of the film to stand proud. There's really nothing to be ashamed of!

You ready? OK, let's go.

"How the hell did these monkeys get like this?" – Leo Davidson

Creating a satisfying scenario that would explain a planet full of talking apes, without mimicking the plot of the 1968 film, can't have been easy.

The original's apocalyptic revelation is so well known that to go down a similar road Burton would have run the risk of ending up with a film with absolutely no secrets.

With hindsight, the pre-release announcement that the planet in this film was definitely not Earth sounded like a considered one – another part of the 're-imagining' campaign. Tell the audience what the film's not, and they won't know what it is. And, hey ho, you've brought back the element of surprise.

While the plot as filmed isn't perfect (chimps piloting pods? Whatever happened to remote control?), the explanation given for the origin of the ape planet is quite satisfying.

At first glance, it doesn't seem to have that much in common with the original Planet Of The Apes movies. However, upon closer inspection, it does share certain themes and ideas – alternate evolution, humans' abuse of technology (in this case, genetics) contributing to their downfall, religious teaching that doesn't tell the whole truth – which help lend some weight to Burton's claim that the film is a "re-imagining".

Leo Davidson might be a calmer, less emotional example of mankind than George Taylor. And, unlike Taylor, you couldn't really describe him as a misanthrope. But he's still a selfish son of a gun.

Until his hand is forced, the only skin that Davidson plans on saving is his own. He treks to Calima for one purpose – to try to find his crew and get the hell off the planet. But what about Daena and the band of freed humans? What about the humanist apes? What will be their fates once he's gone?

Considering that the genesis of all ape and human life on the planet is Davidson's fault – after all, if he hadn't disobeyed orders, there would have been no need for the crew of the Oberon to launch a search or rescue mission – you'd think he might feel some sense of responsibility at the end.

But no, he says his goodbyes and leaves the way he came. And so much for saving Pericles – the swine pinches his pod!

OK, so it's not as big an act of selfishness as detonating an Alpha-Omega bomb during your dying moments and blowing up the entire world. And Mark Wahlberg doesn't exactly deliver his finest performance in this film. But hopefully I've made the point that Davidson, while not quite scaling the same heights of anti-heroes as Charlton Heston's Taylor, certainly isn't the stereotypical good guy that some critics have suggested.

Speaking of Heston, his cameo as an aged, dying ape is one of the highlights of the film for me. As a subscriber to the circular theory of Apes mythology, it's a treat to see the loinclothed ape-hater of the original plastered in prosthetics and battling for the other side. And the tables are turned on ol' Chuck in another, even wittier way, too, as he warns Thade about Man's thirst for destruction, and in particular the evil of guns.

Coming from the president of the National Rifle Association, the irony is thick enough to plaster walls with.

Unsurprisingly, though, it's Tim Roth as Thade who snagged the lion's share of viewers' and critics' comments. Granted, not all of them were complimentary, but heck, it certainly works for this viewer/critic.

In fact, Roth's snarling, spitting, always-angry chimp general manages to instil the same kind of fear in me that I used to get watching Urko in the TV series as a kid.

Of course, the 32-year-old me can see both the comedy and the tragedy in Urko, and nowadays I view him as a much more rounded character. But back in the '70s, to my six-year-old mind, he seemed like the scariest, not to mention hairiest, screen villain ever.

And Thade, for me, brings back all those old feelings. There's no reasoning with him because he works on pure animal instinct.

The dinner table scene, where he grabs Leo and asks him if he has a soul, is nightmarish – there's something very unsettling about seeing an ape staring into a human's mouth. And when Attar tells Thade about the stolen horses, his craziness quite literally scales new
heights.

Our final glimpse of Thade, as he sits trapped, hunched up under a control panel in the Oberon, is one of the most satisfying shots in the film. This once fearless military leader is reduced to the status of a frightened chimpanzee, and you don’t know whether to feel glad or sorry for him.

The other side of the coin is Limbo, a cowardly orang utan slave dealer played by Paul Glamatti, who delivers one of the finest simian turns in the film.

His fast-talking shows of bravado are a delight, and there’s absolutely no self-consciousness from the actor, making it very easy for the viewer to believe that Limbo is a real ape.

The pleasure is in the details: his twitch when swathes of humans descend on the wreck of the Oberon, his simian stutter when he addresses Thade in the slave-trading den. Whatever scene he’s in, Limbo effortlessly steals it.

If a sequel does get the green light, I’d very much like to see Glamatti’s return, even if Limbo doesn’t make the final draft.

And so to the big guys, Attar and Krull, expertly played by Michael Clarke Duncan and Cary-Hiroyuki Tagawa respectively. Both actors capture the nobility and power of gorillas perfectly. Attar, in particular, is an imposing presence throughout the film, thanks in part to the low, decisive tones of that voice.

Yet while Attar would like to see Leo peeled like a banana, Krull aids the human resistance (albeit grudgingly), ultimately paying with his own life at the hand of his opposite number.

By making one of the humans’ allies a gorilla rather than another chimp, Burton manages to steer the sympathetic ape characters away from direct comparisons with Cornelius and Zira. It also suggests that the potential for good exists in every ape – even warriors.

While this doesn’t entirely justify the hurried climax (would it really be possible for apes and humans to kiss and make up in an afternoon?), it at least contributes to making it a bit more believable than it might have been if Leo had hooked up with a pair of defiantly humanist apes from the outset.

Sheesh, all this praise. Surely I hated something about the movie? Well, hate is a strong word – one that I’d hope was more often directed towards real-life murderers than characters and situations in a fantasy film.

But I will admit to harbouring a niggling wish when it comes to the female chimps – and that’s that, before shooting, Rick Baker and his team went back to the drawing board and came up with something a little less anthropomorphic. Or, to put it in simple terms: why do they have to look so much like damned dirty humans?

Apparently, Burton wanted Ari to look at least semi-human to give the audience a point of visual identification (it was even rumoured that we were supposed to – gulp! – fancy her).

This seems a little weird to me, as moviegoers have never had any problem empathising with non-human characters before – Cornelius and Zira are proof of this. It’s more likely that Ari’s hairstyle and pout will simply act as a constant reminder that there’s an actress behind the mask, and that this isn’t, In fact, a gene-spliced, chromosome-enhanced, super-evolved chimp.

Helena Bonham Carter’s portrayal of the humanist ape is occasionally a little shaky, too. Though good with dialogue, whenever she’s called on to make chimp noises, or feign fear or surprise, she fails to convince. Of course, this might not bother me as much if she looked the part...

‘Chimpettes’ aside, though, the make-up and costumes are stunning. I think it was a wise move to use make-up, rather than go the computer-generated route, for the apes.

Don’t get me wrong – I’m not anti-CGI at all. There are some very talented animators in the movie business, who’ve done some fantastic things with it, particularly in the last few years. My jaw can regularly be seen dropping open in darkened cinemas.

But I think that Apes, by its very nature, is a project that demands prosthetics. The original POTA films are loved for their make-up as much as their characters and stories. And knowing that there are real people behind the masks adds an extra dimension to the films’ themes – as Marvel comics used to put it, ‘Where Man once stood supreme, now rule the apes’. Plus, of course, it’s part of Apes tradition that people spend hours inside hot, sweaty appliances. (Oh, you know they love it!)

Burton’s film has some very good set design, too. I’ve heard people criticise the director for his sets (and not just his POTA ones), suggesting that they’re ‘stagey’. While I think that’s true to a certain extent, I’ve
never found it a problem. It could even be argued that it adds to the magical air of unreality that Burton’s films have. Visually, I think that POTA 2001 is a job well done.

If I had been asked to see a film that didn’t feature real chimpanzees and orangutans, I would have preferred to see a film that didn’t feature real chimpanzees and orangutans. Generally speaking, that’s not the way we see it, and it’s not how these highly intelligent animals ought to be working tricks for our entertainment. Yet simian ‘actors’ are still being used in films without so much as a second thought. Go figure.

Still, I take my comfort where I can, and it’s good to know that the animal scenes in POTA 2001 were overseen by the American Humane Association (the film was rubber-stamped ‘acceptable’ – the best possible rating), and that the apes came to no harm while making the film.

Pericles was played by two chimpanzees, Jonah and Jacob, and if you’re interested in reading about their experiences, the AHA has an excellent, detailed web page about the shoot at www.ahafilm.org (in their Reviews section).

There was certainly no monkeying around when it came to scoring the movie. Danny Elfman’s excellent soundtrack really does the business, casting a sinister hue of foreboding and dread over the credits (once you hear that churning ‘dropped bass’ effect, you never forget it), and providing some stunning emotional shading to the film’s peaks and valleys.

Thanks to some inspired arranging, the main theme feels both modern and ancient, managing to convey a sense of otherworldly history and powerful brutality.

Even the film’s harshest critic would have a hard time pouring anything but praise on Elfman’s work here.

Right, that just leaves... that ending.

Visually rich (apes dressed in police suits? Thade as Abraham Lincoln?) and wonderfully unsettling, the scene is possibly the most Burton-esque in the entire movie.

It works in a very different way to the original’s famed Statue of Liberty moment. Rather than reveal and explain, it taunts and confuses, acting as more of a postscript than a conclusion – an idea borne out by its omission from the initial novelisation.

So, what happened? Does the final scene actually make sense?

The most popular explanation has Thade somehow retrieving and fixing Leo’s sunken pod. In fact, this is the scenario outlined on www.apesinsight.com – an official Fox website that was set up in October 2001, presumably to satisfy those viewers who just had to have an answer.

However, listening to the director’s commentary on the DVD, it’s obvious that Burton would rather keep the mystery intact. In fact, he sounds a bit uncomfortable talking about it, though he does hint that there are clues in the film to what happened.

Does the director subscribe to the ‘sunken pod’ theory? Or is ‘apesinsight’ something that Fox’s PR department whipped up in an attempt to quell the rising tide of disgruntlement?

Only Tim Burton has the answer, and he’s keeping schtum. For now.

An idea that I like has Semos taking one of the Oberon’s remaining pods (soon after the original ape rebellion), and using it to travel to Earth’s not-too-distant past. True, this throws up another question – why didn’t any of the human survivors try escaping in one of the pods? But the theory does at least fit in with what we see of Semos in the film: a painting of an ape sitting in a bubble-like structure, surrounded by clouds.

Could that structure be a pod, and could the paintings be a clue?

The evolved apes expect Semos to return one day. True, most religions have prophecies about returning saviours, but in this case, it’s also possible that Semos physically went somewhere, that he flew away, perhaps even promising to return.

So far so good, but where does Thade come into all this? After all, it’s his face, not Semos’s, on the statue, right?

I’m afraid this is where this particular theory requires some serious imagination, as there are no

Why The Long Face?

The only animals on board the Oberon were apes. The planet wasn’t Earth. So where did the horses come from?

The answer can be found in William T. Quick’s excellent novel, Planet Of The Apes: The Fall (HarperEntertainment, ISBN 0-06-008820-3).

The book is probably best described as a prequel to the film, though that’s not entirely accurate, as it starts in pretty much the same time and place – on board the Oberon as Leo’s pod vanishes from view.

But while the film follows Davidson, The Fall sticks with the crew of the space station, detailing the crash and the apes’ eventual uprising.

Dark and gripping, Quick’s story fleshes out the origins of the ape planet in gory detail. Not only is it a cracking read in its own right, but it also adds new layers of enjoyment to Burton’s movie.
clues in the film as to what happened next.

But hang on a mo', maybe that in itself is a clue.

At this point in the story, Thade has yet to discover space travel. What if, having tasted power and freedom back on the planet of the apes, Semos starts to sow the seeds of an ape revolution on Earth? Perhaps he returns to the ape planet after Leo has left, piloting a larger ship, and whisks Thade and armies of apes off to Earth to aid the revolt. As far as Thade is concerned, it's the perfect revenge.

I know, I know, I'm taking huge liberties, inventing a plot from a tiny slither of possibility. But isn't this what Apes fans have been doing with the original films for years?

No one knows for sure how Cornelius, Zira and Milo came to be flying one of the crashed ships when the Earth exploded at the end of Beneath. It isn't clear whether Caesar's birth changes the planet's ultimate future, or whether the Aldo that Cornelius refers to in Escape is the same Aldo from Battle.

But instead of detracting from fans' enjoyment, these question marks seem to enhance it by sprinkling mystery on the mythos. They also provide ideas for fan-fic, as well as stimulating some inventive debate (hey, you can call them arguments if you like, but I'm being polite).

One can't help wondering if a small part of Burton's plan for the ending involved homage. Perhaps it's meant to be a reminder of the original films' more confusing moments; a nudge and a wink to everyone whose jaw dropped when they saw the three ape-onaunts at the beginning of Escape.

"But that's not possible!" Hey, bud, this is the movies. Anything is possible, if you want it to be.

As for f***ing with people's heads... Though Burton was probably just being cheeky with that quote, I think there's a deeper truth behind it.

The director was basically in a no-win situation with Planet Of The Apes. However the movie ended, it was never going to top Charlton Heston collapsing in front of Lady Liberty and damning humanity to Hell.

How could it? It's the definitive Twilight Zone moment; shocking, chilling and thought-provoking - everything you could possibly want from a final scene. Bettering it was going to be a very tall order.

So, it wasn't even attempted. Instead, Burton's film gave us a mystery, a puzzle. This was one way to get people talking about it. "Have you seen Planet Of The Apes? What's with that ending?"

That final scene is also reminiscent of the end of Pierre Bouille's book, La Planete Des Singes, or Monkey Planet - the source for all things Ape. If the scene was designed as an homage to the book, it creates an interesting paradox as far as criticism is concerned.

Filmmakers who try to bring their own ideas to the table when they embark on remakes or sequels often bring down the wrath of hardcore fans. Perhaps the ending of POTA 2001 is Burton's (ironic) comment on this phenomenon.

He could be saying, "So, you think I'm messing around with Planet Of The Apes, eh? Well, look at this - my ending is almost straight out of the book. And you're still not happy!" How's that for some serious head-messin'?

So, yeah, I've come to like the ending. It's not an answer, it's a question, and, I think, an interesting one.

The writers of a sequel, if there's going to be one, have got their work cut out, but that's probably a good thing. If the story picks up where it left off, the audience is going to demand an explanation. And necessity is the mother of invention, as someone both creative and wise once said.

And so, m'lud, that concludes the case for the defence of Tim Burton's Planet Of The Apes.

If you're a fan, I hope I've done you proud. If you're not, I hope I've gone at least some way to explaining the film's appeal. Of course, I'd be very pleased if I inspired someone that didn't like the movie to take a fresh look at it. But just being given this opportunity to share my thoughts is enough, really.

As a parting shot, I feel I should mention that this film has rekindled my love affair with Planet Of The Apes.

As a kid in the '70s, I'd sit glued to the TV series, and I've fond early memories of getting Ape's dolls for Christmas (dolls which, sadly, were thrown in the trash before I reached double figures - man, it's scary when you think about the fates of your old toys!).

Being plunged back into this world reminded me just how much dammed fun Apes is. I've since gone on to re-experience and enjoy the original movies and TV show, and have spent a small fortune collecting comics, figures, books and CDs.

Whatever your opinion of Burton's film, one thing's for sure: it's thrust Apes back into the frontline of popular culture, and that can only be a good thing.

New fans means new blood and new ideas. And, of course, an expanding fan base creates the demand for new products, both classic and 'Burton'.

So, if you haven't already done so, send those postcards demanding a sequel off to Fox.

And perhaps, one day, Apes really will rule the planet.
GORILLA GRAMS

SFX Magazine, the premiere science fiction magazine, made Simian Scrolls 5 Fanzine of the Month and that is a wonderful tribute to the talent, hard work and effort put in by all of the contributors to issue 5. Congratulations to everybody involved - you all deserve it and it just goes to show that Apes really do rule!!!

A big part of the success of Simian Scrolls #5 was the amazing cover by Dave Heulon-Jones and the post bag certainly reflected that - "Wonderfully groovy cover" - Dean Bulaam; "I love the funky cover" - Steve Edwards ("groovy" and "funky" on one page - who let Austin Powers in here!!?); "Loved the cover" - Gerald Crotoy - and he is a man who knows a bit about doing stunning covers, as his Delta Source work shows - (see below); "The cover's great" - Martin Meeks etc etc. It seems that Dave's cover was a big hit and a big Scrolls thank you to him for his time and effort.

This issue's cover is by the one and only Carl Critchlow. You will see an advert on page 27 for his wonderful "Thrud the Barbarian" which I can't recommend highly enough. Visit his website (see page 27) if you don't believe me. "Thrud" issue 1 has had a great review in the comics press ("imagine Conan meets Asterix on steroids" said Comics International!) and everyone should get on board now because "Thrud" is going to be massive.

On the contents of issue 5, most people found most of the features to their liking, the main gripe being that the David Gerrold interview was too short - your humble Editor fully agrees with that one but, in his defence, it can be a very difficult balancing act to avoid discouraging people by overwhelming them with too many questions. Just to be awkward, a nameless reader, who is not an Apes fan (the poor guy!) only bought Scrolls # 5 for the David Gerrold interview and said it was "very good". Anyway, we hope the Ian Edginton interview this issue leaves everyone satisfied - Ian is an absolute star and a real Apes fan himself. If you see his name on the credits of any comics, buy 10 copies. At the moment, Ian's current big project is Batman/Aliens II - issue 1 has been stunning and is well worth picking up.

The Glenn Shadix (Senator Nado in the Tim Burton movie) interview will be in issue 7 now later this year. It would have looked a bit out of place this issue and it is certainly well worth waiting for.

Amazingly, some people still find time to do non-Ape related activities. Rob Kirby's book on the history of Marvel UK should be out soon and if this issue's article (pages 3-6) is anything to go by, it will be a stonker and a must buy - keep an eye out for it. Delta Source, another SFX Fanzine of the Month winner, continues to go from strength to strength and is highly recommended - Delta Source is available from Mark Richards, Delta Source, 43, North 12th Street, Central Milton Keynes, Milton Keynes, MK9 3BS. mark@deltasourceonline.co.uk - www.deltasourceonline.co.uk. When not picking fleas out of his master's jock strap, Urko Unsworth's human slave, Roy Mitchell, puts out "Popsicle" the premiere fan magazine on that cinematic phenomenon, the Lemon Popsicle films. Roy is a Scrolls stalwart and deserves support. Let him have £2.00/$5.00 and view life through lemon tinted spectacles for ever more. Roy can be contacted at: Roy Mitchell, 14, Cornwall Drive, Hindley, Wigan, WN2 4DS. e-mail: popsiclepe@hotmail.com. Whilst we are on the Fanzine trail, the best Doctor Who fanzine is "The Doctor's Recorder" at £2.00 from Andrew Hardstaffe of Flat 42, Rosebank House, 217, Belle Vue Road, Leeds, LS3 1HG. Andy has been a good friend of Scrolls and his Fanzine is superb.

There must be something in the water in South Wales as the Swansea Valley Sci-Fi Association, run by Carwyn and Tony can be found at 49, High Street, Pontardawe, Swansea, SA3 4JH. This is an association for fans and collectors alike and they try to answer people's questions regarding sci-fi and collecting etc. They put out a fascinating Newsletter called "Fax and Figures - Action Figure Newsletter" which has all of the up to date news and information on action figures etc. Definitely well worth a look - don't forget to tell them that Apes John from West Wales sent you! Carwyn and Tony have also asked for a mention for S.F. Comet, 49B, Swansea Market, Swansea, Wales, SA15 3PQ e-mail : scomet@aol.com, a shop dealing in sci-fi and memorabilia. They do mail order and if you are trying to hunt something down get in touch with them. On that topic, another excellent source for trying to track down that elusive annual, comic or boardgame is "The Sanctuary", who can be contacted at 69, the Pastures, Lower Bullingham, Hereford, Herefordshire, HR2 6EU. I have found "The Sanctuary" really good in the past and if you get in touch, tell them Scrolls sent you.

An enormous thank you goes out to everybody who contributed to this issue. As well as Carl's stunning work on the cover, a tremendous amount of time and effort has been put in by Rob Kirby, Darren Stockford, Steve Edwards, Alan Maxwell, Roy Mitchell, Pete Wallbank, Ian Ward, Rich Cross and Ian Edginton in getting issue 6
together. A massive gorilla hug to all of you. The biggest single contribution to Scrolls 6, without which Scrolls 6 would simply not have been possible, was made by Dave Ballard. As well as his own personal contributions, Dave has stepped in to help with layouts and designs for both covers and also the layout and design of Ian Edginton’s interview. Dave’s contribution to issue 6 exceeds by far the contribution of your humble Editor. Dave has modestly declined to be described as “Co-Editor” but, notwithstanding that, Dave’s contribution demands recognition. Suffice it to say that much of what is good and successful in issue 6 is down to Dave. Anything that doesn’t come up to scratch, is entirely down to the Editor.

NEWS: As well as the very sad news of the passing of several Apes legends in the past year (see pages 10 and 11) there is also the tragic news of Charlton Heston’s illness. Mr. Heston has requested that people don’t show him pity and Scrolls will respect his wishes whilst at the same time hoping that Mr. Heston can overcome this. Scrolls had the chance to participate in a wonderful charity project run by F.A.C.E., in hunting out a suitable photographer for Roger Dobson at F.A.C.E and then prepared a cocktail for Mr. Heston to sign (as mentioned in the last Newsletter). Not surprisingly, the signed cocktails sold out quickly and Roger Dobson deserves a major pat on the back for his charity work in the wake of September 11. Despite his illness, Mr. Heston readily cooperated which says a lot about him. Anybody interested in autographs really should contact F.A.C.E at P.O. Box 153, Shrewsbury, Shropshire. SY1 2ZG (enclose an SAE if you can) - as well as supplying all of the latest news and information, F.A.C.E. can give pointers to help you avoid being ripped off.

There is a whisper from across The Pond that the US Fanzine “Ape Chronicles” may be about to resume publication. “Ape Chronicles” was, for many years, a lone voice in the wilderness. When there weren’t any other Ape fanzines or clubs out there, “Ape Chronicles” helped provide a focus for Ape fandom and in many ways bridged the gap until Tim Burton reminded the world about who really does “Rule the Planet”. As soon as there is more news on “Ape Chronicles”, we will do our best to distribute details and Scrolls wishes everybody involved with “Ape Chronicles” every success. Following on from this great news, there is also the possibility that an International Fan Club for Apes may soon be started up. It is very early days at the moment but, again, as soon as we have more news on that we will spread the good word.

The response to the postcard campaign for an Apes sequel was overwhelming in its response from fans and completely underwhelming in its response from Fox. The word on a sequel sounds promising as at least one website has been told that there are plans for a sequel. Again, we will keep our hairy ear to the ground on that one but a big, big thanks to everybody who posted their card. We may do a follow up campaign later.

William Quick’s third Planet of the Apes novel, following on from his “prequel” novel “The Fall” is due out later in April. The new novel is called “Planet of the Apes - Colony” with the tag-line “There are some things more terrifying than man...”. Have a look on the Harper Collins website and also check out Amazon/WH Smith’s websites in March/April. The more of these books we buy, the better the merchandising looks and the more likely it will be that there will be more films, TV series and other goodies. The next two teen novels (see Urko Unsworth’s review of the first two on pages 39 and 40) were scheduled to be out later this year but, at the moment, it looks as though the timing is doubtful.

Ian Edginton, as a special offer to Scrolls readers, has kindly offered to sell personalised copies of “The Human War” £6.99 including postage (UK only - it would obviously be higher postage if overseas) and also of the special DF copies of “The Human War” comic, issue No. 1 for £2.50 plus postage. These items will be mega collectible as the years pass, especially when a movie sequel appears so don’t be slow in taking up the offer. Anyway interested can send in payment to “Ian Edginton” with their details and I will arrange for the payment to be sent on to Ian directly.

For our US readers (a steadily growing band) we ask that rather than send payment to us for Scrolls in the UK, an equivalent contribution be made by you to the September 11 charity of your choice. Whilst US readers can obviously pick whichever charity they like, if they want a suggestion, Scrolls nominates the USA Widows’ and Children’s Fund, the details for whom are set out at the bottom of this page.

COMPETITION TIME: Ian Edginton has kindly donated copies of “The Human War”, “Old Gods” trade paperbacks and the DF Limited Edition issue 1 of “The Human War” comic itself, all of which he has signed personally. Ian Edginton’s question for the competition is: Which veteran Hollywood actor was originally approached to play Dr. Zaius in the original Planet of the Apes movie and what other science fiction film did he later star in with Charlton Heston? Entries need to be in by no later than 31st March, 2003 and the winner will be drawn out of a hat containing all correct entries. The Editor’s decision will be final! Many thanks to Ian for this kind gesture.

Issue 7 of Scrolls will be appearing in the Summer. In the meantime, don’t forget, APES RULE!!!

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