

STATE OF THE ART

A column of opinion by David Gerrold



In 1972, I wrote a book called *The Trouble With Tribbles* (you may have heard of it). The first line was: "In 1966, I was a rabbit." The book was published (along with *The World Of Star Trek*) in February of 1973.

In February of 1973, I was a chimpanzee.

You see, at that time, Judy-Lynn Del Rey (who is one-half of Del Rey Books, the other half being Lester Del Rey) was the managing editor of *Galaxy Magazine*, which was just upstairs from *Award Books*; both were owned by Universal Publishing and Distributing. *Award Books* had bid on and secured the rights to publish the novel versions of the *Planet Of The Apes* movies, and now they were looking for a writer to adapt the fifth and last film into a book so that they could release it simultaneously with the movie.

So, they called upstairs to Judy-Lynn Del Rey and asked her if she knew a big-name science-fiction writer who would work cheap. He had to be (a) good, (b) fast, and (c) know his way

around a motion picture script. Judy-Lynn suggested me. And that's how I came to write the novelization of *Battle For The Planet Of The Apes*.

However, the real reason for doing it was that I wanted to be an ape. Not that that was part of the deal, but it wasn't too hard to arrange. A few phone calls to the studio, a savvy explanation of how I would probably do an article for some magazine or other about what it was like to be an ape in the film—which meant free publicity for them—and it was done.

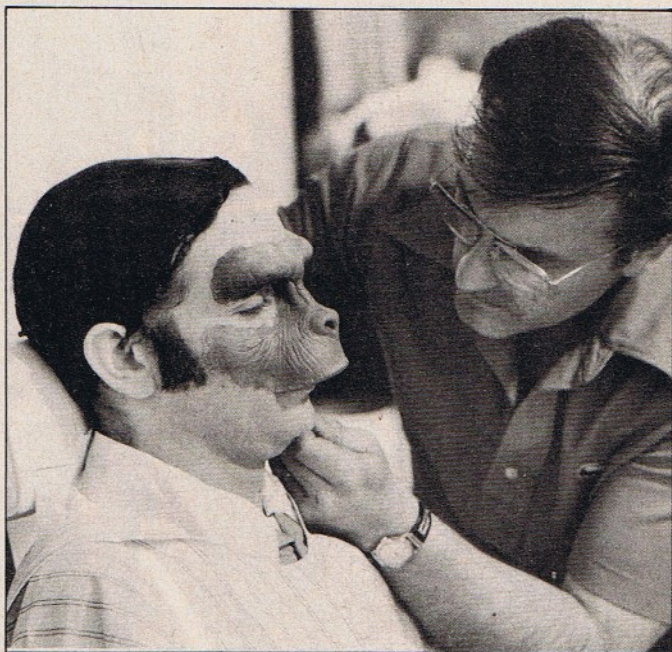
So, that was why 9:00 AM, one warm California morning in February 1973, I went traipsing out to the 20th Century-Fox Ranch somewhere on the other side of Hidden Hills. The rest of the cast and atmosphere people (extras) had already arrived and been put in costume—they had the six o'clock call; because I was a non-essential part of the picture, I had to wait and come in after the important people were already taken care of.

A publicity man named John Campbell (no relation to the former editor of *Analog*) took me first to the costume

truck. There, the decision was made that I was too tall to be an orangutan. Therefore I would have to be a gorilla. I was a little taller than a chimpanzee *should* be, but they did have a costume that would fit . . . so, chimp it was. They found tunic, trousers and shoes to match, and then we were off to the makeup truck.

There, the makeup men started by testing the molded foam rubber pieces, called appliances, on my face to see which ones would fit best; there were six basic models of chimpanzee faces, each for a different face shape or size. Eventually, they settled on the "Roddy-Double" which is the design mask that Roddy McDowall wore in all of the pictures. It would look different on me (or on anybody who wore it) because of the differences in underlying bone structure and facial features.

The chimpanzee makeup takes three hours to put on. The makeup men begin by tying down your hair and then putting a stocking cap over it to hold it flat. It is painful, and at the end of the day, when it is removed, it is even more



To achieve the results on the left, the foamed latex prosthetic appliances are secured with spirit gum to author Gerrold's face.

painful—do not try to do anything at all to your hair, let it lay there and moan. If you touch it, attempt to comb it, even try to fluff it up, every follicle will scream in horrifying unison.

Then, they begin by attaching the appliance. There are two pieces: the larger piece covers most of the face; there is a big protruding upper lip, which covers your upper lip and all of your nose (yes, there are air holes), both of your cheeks—leaving holes for the eyes—and most of your forehead. The piece is finely cast, showing all kinds of features and wrinkles on the outside, but it is very light and very soft rubber, and it is smooth on the side that attaches to your skin. Even so, it is not something that you would want to wear on your face every day. (For one thing, the additional weight on your facial muscles would cause your skin to wrinkle, sag and age a little more quickly than otherwise.) After this is glued on with spirit gum, a kind of non-destructive rubber cement, the makeup man works his way around the edges, smoothing them out and blending them into the skin so that no lines show. The edges of the appliance are so thin that when they are properly applied, they don't show a crease. The smaller piece of the appliance fits over the chin and brings the lower lip out far enough to meet and match the upper one.

After both pieces are applied, a

matching brown makeup is put on all those parts of the actor's face that still show—eyelids, neck, the places around the edges of the appliance. Hair is then attached around these edges, sometimes only a few strands at a time. Finally ears and a wig are put on over the actor's head and the transformation of the face is complete.

The first thing you do is sit in front of a mirror and make faces at yourself. When you grin, the monkey staring back at you grins—when you puff your cheeks, he puffs his cheeks—when you wrinkle your nose or frown, he wrinkles or frowns. The appliances are extremely flexible and are designed to show the facial expressions of the actor underneath. In fact, the masks only look like masks when they are *not* moving, so that makeup men recommend that the actor always be doing something—puffing his cheeks or wrinkling his nose or working his mouth so that it looks like he is breathing or sniffing or just moving his lips while he reads.

The final step is the makeup of the hands. Your fingernails are painted black, your skin is painted brown, and the makeup men then glue a thick mat of black hair to the backs of your hands. The whole process, face, hands, wig, hair, etcetera, is very painstaking—the reason it takes three hours is that most of the makeup men in Hollywood are perfectionists. They have to be: the camera reveals the slightest error. For instance, if I had been playing a speaking part requiring a closeup, they would have had to blacken my teeth so that the camera would not see my own mouth inside the ape's. But,

as I was merely an “extra,” this step wasn't necessary.

Once the makeup is on, then you get into your costume. That's when I was shown the proper way to monkey-walk (“Crouch low, swing your arms”) and turned loose upon an unsuspecting world.

Well, not quite unsuspecting.

We rode a jeep down to the actual location site, which was about a half-mile away, and I was told to report with the rest of the stunt men.

Stunt men?!!

Well, yes, you see—today we're shooting the battle sequences and the only apes we're using are stunt men. But, don't worry, you won't be hurt.

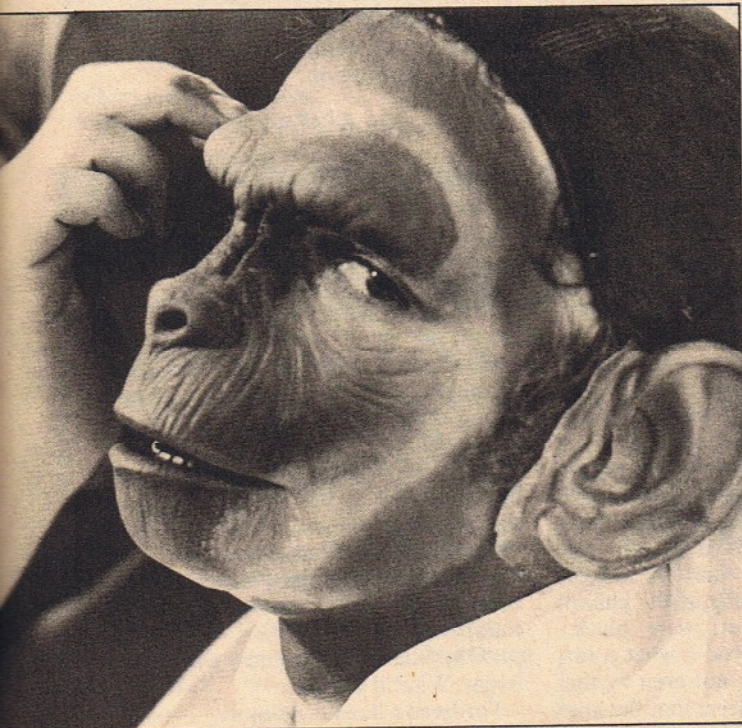
Oh. Terrific.

There were Roddy McDowall and Paul Williams (and somewhere Claude Akins) busy defending some trees—which were supposed to be Ape City—from Severn Dardin and a broken down school bus—who were supposed to be the mutant army. That was the battle. That shot was finished, and they began setting up the next. It takes at least a half-hour or more to set up each shot. Most of movie-making is waiting. It's almost as much fun as the army.

I used the time to get acquainted with the “stock company” of regular monkeys, and they showed me some more tricks of the trade—how to run like an ape, for instance. They knew immediately that I was a newcomer to the tribe. With very little practice, you can learn to recognize people very easily—not specifically as people perhaps, but as individuals, definitely. Every monkey has a distinct facial appearance; we did

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Left: The edges are blended with liquid latex and powdered.
Above: David receives instructions from director Thompson.

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not all look alike. Interestingly, the chimpanzees generally hung out with other chimpanzees, the orangutans stayed with the other orangutans, and the gorillas kept mostly with the gorillas. It didn't matter that underneath the makeup we were all human—there was just that sense of "wanting to be with our own kind." Which also may explain why most of us apes tended to keep apart from most of the humans—besides, the humans kept *gawking* at us.

I discovered also that it was easier to "stay in character" as a chimpanzee than to try to ignore the makeup. When walking from one place to another, even if it was only to get a drink of water, it seemed natural to "monkey-walk" or even "monkey-run" which is a whole 'nother matter.

When we broke for lunch, I discovered that eating while made up as a monkey presented a totally new set of challenges. There are some things you should not even attempt—spaghetti, for example. It's best to choose something that you can cut into small bites, something that isn't drippy, and something that you can shove past the appliances on your upper and lower lips so you can get it all the way into your mouth—a fork comes in very handy for this. Some of the other apes were very proficient, others couldn't be bothered and removed their chin pieces so they could eat normally—the makeup men always did repair jobs after lunch. Others ate in front of mirrors so they could see what they were doing. I had a glass of milk, through a straw, some pieces of bread and some chunks of a banana. (*Talk about staying in character... Ed.*)

After lunch, we picked up a battle scene in which the school bus full of mutants crashes through the apes' barricades. I got to be one of the dead monkeys on the ground. This was my big scene. Nearby, one of the stunt men cautioned me, "If the bus comes too close to you, get up and get out of the way. Don't worry about ruining the shot."

That was reassuring.

They did three takes on it, the bus never came close, and then they blew up one of the tree houses for another shot (no monkeys needed here) and that was "a wrap" for the day. I'd been a dead monkey in one long shot. Oh, well.

Some of the apes immediately began pulling off their makeup as they started walking back to the makeup and costume trucks. I decided to wait for help from a makeup man. It looked painful. Several of those in the chimp makeup, it turned out, were black. There's no way to tell who is what color under the ape makeup, not even by the eyes—although it did seem that the ape

makeup was more convincing on the black stunt men because their eyes were brown. Blue- and green-eyed apes tend to look a little bit "masked"—brown-eyed apes are not only more realistic, they seem kinder-looking.

My last shock of the day occurred when I stopped at a urinal to relieve myself.

In the short time I had been in the monkey makeup, I had begun to think and feel like a chimp. However, there was one part of my anatomy that had remained unchanged, and as I stood above the urinal, I noticed a distinct dichotomy between my monkey hands and my human appendage. I felt distinctly schizophrenic. The human part of me felt like I was being molested by someone else's hands. The monkey part of me felt short-changed at having to pee through a human organ.

It is amazing how quickly you begin to feel like an ape once you get the hang of it.

I was destined to wear the ape makeup once again. Two months later, the first Los Angeles *Star Trek* Convention was held; EQUICON '73. It was at a hotel then known as the LA International, and only the immediate city attended. One of the planned events was an ape makeup demonstration. I would be put in the ape makeup again, and then I would emcee the masquerade as Cornelius from *The Planet of the Apes*.

This time, there was an audience watching to see how it was done. The makeup man was Werner Keppler, and he started working on me at 4:00. At 6:30, someone asked him how long it took to put the makeup on. He said, "Three hours." Then, the same person asked, "How long does it take to get it off?" And Werner answered in his thickest, most Germanic accent, "Ven I put it on, it *stayss* on."

Oh, okay.

We finished at seven—we had a little bit of time before the masquerade had to start, so we went into the coffee shop to get me some dinner. The only thing on the menu that I could easily eat was . . . bananas and cream. The waitress didn't even blink.

Well, you figure it out—a hotel full of *Star Trek* fans, Andorians, Vulcans, giant tribbles, Hortas and Starfleet members, who's going to notice an ape eating a bowl of bananas with a knife and fork?

After the masquerade, a friend took me to the bar to buy me a drink—but the bartender glanced at me and said, "We don't serve monkeys in here."

I stood up on my chair and called him a racist. "I'm not a monkey, I'm a chimpanzee."

"Oh," he said, "I guess that's different. What'll you have?"

I ordered a banana daiquiri. ★