

ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE APES

LEGEND OF THE LOST FOOTAGE

The pre-credit sequence from *'Escape from the Planet of the Apes'* is often cited as one of the most popular and memorable moments from the entire series, but for many the enjoyment of this short sequence is tainted with the knowledge that it was originally intended to be considerably longer.

The deleted footage has always been the cause of much speculation. Rumours abound of the edited footage resting in the hands of private collectors and stories persist, to this day, of the sequence having been included in overseas edits of the movie.

When the DVD *'Evolution'* Box set was announced fans expressed their belief that the deleted sequence was an obvious contender to be included in any bonus supplementary material but sadly we were all to be disappointed when 20th Century Fox ultimately saw fit to treat the movies with their usual contempt and offered us precious little new at all.

Adding fuel to the fire is our sure knowledge that if perhaps there *was* an extended version of *'Escape'* somewhere in the world, then it wouldn't be unique. *'Battle'* is widely known to have suffered from similar cuts and another, longer, version does exist.

As enthusiastic Ape fans there are many things we long for concerning this deleted sequence... But what do we actually know..?

Obviously the scene was included in the shooting script so perhaps the best place to start would be with a look at Paul Dehn's opening pages to a revised script dated 12/9/70...

"ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE APES" Original Screenplay by PAUL DEHN

FROM BLACK SCREEN -CUT TO EXTREME CLOSE UP: THE EXPLOSION OF ROCKETS as we watch as it speeds away from CAMERA.

CUT TO: EXT. SPACESHIP It soars into space.

INT. ORBITING SPACESHIP through whose windows the same light vividly illuminates three space-suited and helmeted ASTRONAUTS -afraid & curiously hesitant at the controls. We establish a Dual Date Meter showing the year in terms of both "EARTH TIME" + "SELF TIME." Both panels read: 3955.

ASTRONAUT 1 (MALE) We made it.

ASTRONAUT 2 (MALE) So far. But one thing is for certain. Whoever wins the war, there'll be no place on Earth for us.

ASTRONAUT 3 (FEMALE) Where are we going?

ASTRONAUT 2 (MALE) (*briskly*) Probably to our death. But just possibly...

P.O.V. SHOT - EARTH'S RIM WHITENS TO INCANDESCENCE a soundless explosion sends a column of fire mushrooming up towards us.

INT SPACESHIP... Appalled silence. Through the ship's windows the ASTRONAUTS are watching (and we with them) the nuclear disintegration of Earth. The incandescence almost burns through their space helmets.

In awed voices:

ASTRONAUT 2 The fools...they've finally destroyed themselves.

ASTRONAUT 1 My God, the earth is no more.

ASTRONAUT 3 And we've escaped.

The spaceship begins to shudder.

ASTRONAUT 2 We have, if we survive the shock wave.

The shock wave of the huge, megatonic explosion hits the spaceship from below. Chaos & pandemonium inside. We multiply normal air turbulence a thousandfold & are bashed, buffeted, whirled, lifted a hundred miles & dropped fifty, before slowly flattening out to some semblance of equilibrium on (presumably) a new orbit. The Date Meter digits under "EARTH TIME" begin to click & race erratically. ASTRONAUT 2 watches intently.

ASTRONAUT 2 The shock must have unbalanced the mechanism. I don't understand.

Now he turns to look at another dial.

ILLUMINATED PANEL LABELLED "AUTOMATIC RE-ENTRY SEQUENCE" - Across it curves the descending graph line which traces optimum re-entry path. Now the lights begin to trace the spacecraft's actual re-entry path, which sometimes slightly deviates to left or right of the graph line but always approximately follows its course.

ASTRONAUT 2 We've been forced out of orbit.

ASTRONAUT 1 (*looking at panel*) We're descending.

ASTRONAUT 3 But where?

The spacecraft is seared with flames and smoke as it plummets through space. The windows fog and blacken. ASTRONAUT feverishly works at controls to no response.

LONG SHOT - SPACECRAFT (STOCK) - The fiery missile descends on our screen.

FLAMES AND SMOKE - leap at the windows. Descent is rapid, and suddenly through the blackened windows the entry is completed for light can be seen flickering through the charred cracks.

SUBJECTIVE P.O.V. - We descend rapidly to be swallowed in a cloud bank.

INT. SPACECRAFT - SHOOTING across the frozen ASTRONAUTS, we see the Date Meter spin to a halt.

EARTH TIME 1973 - SHIP TIME 3955

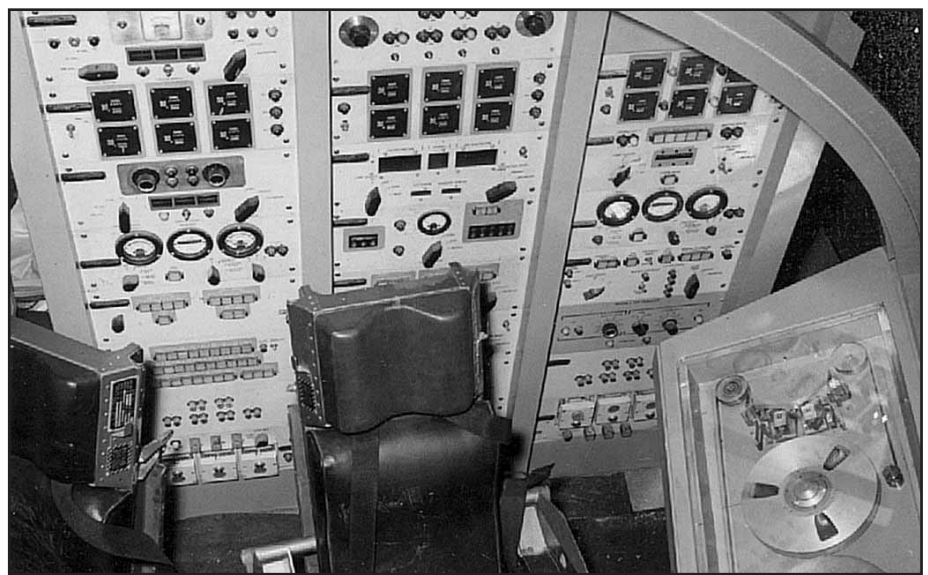
SUBJECTIVE P.O.V. (STOCK) We are crashing rapidly into the ocean.

SPLASHDOWN (STOCK) The spacecraft split the water into churning waves. Then all is still.

Fact.

Obviously the scene was included in Paul Dehn's original shooting script (relevant section reproduced here). In its original format this totals just two and a half pages and the Hollywood rule of thumb is that one page of script equals one minute of screen time...It's therefore safe to assume that the edited sequence lasted approximately two and a half minutes.

As can be seen on the right, sets for the spaceship interior *were* constructed. For additional info visit (<http://www.cloudster.com/Sets&Vehicles/ApesShip/PofA01.html>). Conspiracy buffs have noted that the 'Escape' interiors bear little resemblance to those seen in the original movie and explanations for this are as numerous as there are fans - but that is a discussion for another day. It is interesting to note however that both the Escape interiors and exteriors are identical to Virdon's ship from the TV series so it would have been the same prop being recycled - which raises another interesting notion, albeit one not entirely relevant to this article - that faced with a third seat, and as a simpler solution to rebuilding, did the producers of the TV show opt to fill it with a dead body, the astronaut 'Jonesy' (a third astronaut is not present in Serling's original script)?



Back to the facts...

Kim Hunter (Zira) revealed in an interview with the excellent "Apesfan" that she "thought" she remembered interior spacecraft scenes being shot. Later, in a letter to Luis Adami, She seemed more certain. But when answering questions for our very own Fanzine she replied, "I have no recollection of any such scenes." (Simian Scrolls, Issue 4)

So the sets were built, but were they really ever used? With respect to the much-missed Kim Hunter, yes they were, without a doubt. Our evidence? Check these out...



In addition to these tantalizing images surviving production records tell us that December 4 was "special effects day" a day put aside for the company to shoot the space capsule in orbit around earth. As the late Don Taylor, Director of Escape revealed: "There's a lot of film somewhere. A whole day's worth of electronics and special effects. I don't know why we cut it. I guess we just didn't need it."

Possible explanations for Miss Hunter's confusion might lie in nothing more than a faulty memory or *possibly* the performer in *her* suit may have been a body double.



Here, more evidence shows both Roddy McDowell and Sal Mineo in the space suits without Ape make-up, but none are known to show Kim Hunter.

During the deleted scenes the visors would have been pulled down so it would not have been absolutely necessary for Kim to have ever been on set, a voice over could have been added later.



Post production

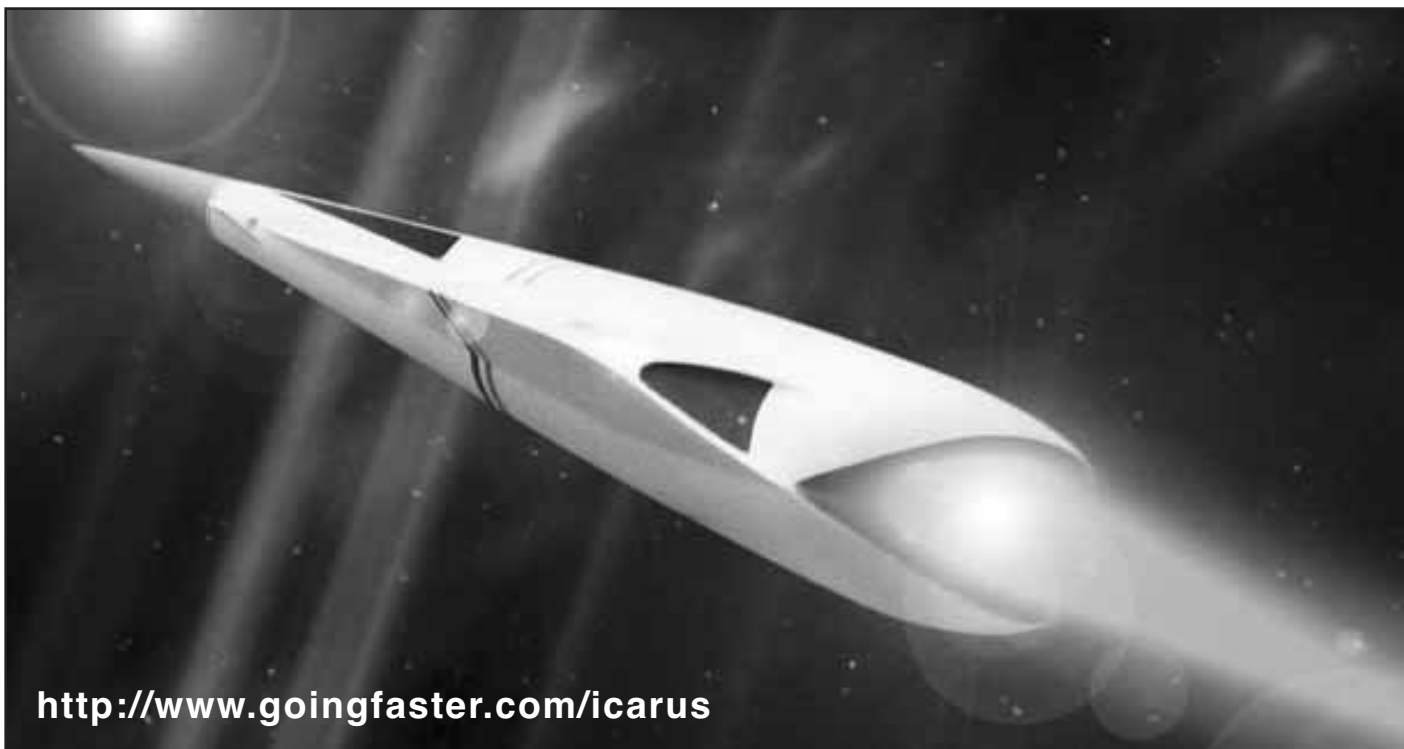
Whether or not any post production work was added is unknown. In one of our pictures some "streaks" can be seen through the ships windows. What these actually are remains uncertain. The sequence as scripted and if done properly would have required time-consuming (ie expensive) special effects (explosions, shock waves, stars, model spaceships etc) to create images similar to the CG image shown below. (Though it's equally possible that the destruction of the Earth could have been simply suggested simply by a sudden, off camera, bright light.)

Producer Frank Capra says, "As I recall, it just didn't seem to fit. This was not a science fiction piece as much as the others. The spaceship was only to get them into the water and then onto the beach. It was more about people and personality than science fiction. By beginning in space, people might have expected a different kind of film."

If this then is true then the sequence wasn't dropped due to budget restrictions or a tight shooting schedule but simply because of content... So the money may have been spent and a spectacular two and a half minute sequence may well exist... If so, then where is it?

The footage would, for now appear to have been genuinely lost. It seems unlikely that the AMC documentary "Behind the Planet of the Apes" would have passed by the opportunity to use it had it been available. Unused footage remains the property of the studio and is generally stored in their vaults. In an ideal world all this footage can easily be found later on. As one fan on a discussion group suggests, generally the reason that it can't be found is because it was not properly catalogued or perhaps not even catalogued at all! In this situation someone has to look for it and unfortunately for us that costs the studio money. Studios will not invest in looking for lost footage - footage that when found will need further investment to restore - unless there's money to be made from the endeavour. so the bottom line is that from a financial point of view it's more cost-effective for lost footage to stay lost.

It has been reported that a significant number of 20th Century Fox's archives are down in a salt mine somewhere in Kansas and there is a very good chance that unused footage from possibly all the ape movies is among them. Freelance film historians, individual fans or groups of volunteers are happy to explore these archives free of charge but are always refused permission not only for health and safety concerns but also for matters of national security for even secret U.S government documents are said to be stored there.



<http://www.goingfaster.com/icarus>



From the Marvel comics adaption with A/W by Rico Rival.

Fiction:

Okay, we've established that the scenes were shot. Now why do rumours persist of people having seen them? Working from the script rather than the movie itself, the Marvel comic strip adaptation featured the missing sequence and even featured it on their cover (UK issue No 50 – US No 12). Which just might explain why some people think they have seen the footage. It's not unreasonable to suspect that just like those of Miss Hunter, our memories, blurred with time, might confuse a series of illustrated panels, read almost thirty years ago, with images once seen on a cinema screen.

Will we ever know for sure... All it takes is for one brave Ape fan to cast caution to the wind and venture deep down below the earth into the salt mines beneath Kansas. Perhaps there someone will finally unearth this particular buried treasure.

Kansas salt mine warehouse preserves Hollywood's treasures

The original film negative for "The Wizard of Oz." A collection of New York newspapers dating to the assassination of President Lincoln. Secret U.S. government documents. Thousands of medical research biopsies, all encased in wax - all these -- and so much more -- are buried 645 feet beneath the Kansas prairie in a vast underground salt mine warehouse teeming with treasures and oddities from across the nation.

Salt deposits were formed when an inland sea that once covered Kansas evaporated. Now, 230 million years later The Hutchinson company has built a thriving business from mined-out sections of the salt mine and has been stashing things here since 1959, where the temperature is a constant 68 degrees and the humidity is always 50 percent — perfect conditions for storing film.

To get to the film, one needs to put on a hard hat, strap on a self-rescuer - a five-pound device, similar to what scuba divers use, that provides clean air to breathe in case of a fire - and descend 650 feet into the earth by way of a 77-year-old elevator - actually, more of a hoist with an aboveground operator to run it - for a minute-long ride in total darkness. At the bottom, the equivalent of 60 stories below ground, is a salt bed - discovered in 1889 while drilling for oil - It is 100 miles long by 40 miles wide, and 325 feet thick.

A low salt ceiling and antique mining equipment greet the visitor before opening up to a level cement floor and rough rock walls and ceilings painted white to keep the salt dust down.

The storage vaults use only a few of the caverns left behind from mining activities. The company has available 800 acres of mined-out space, but so far has used just 12 acres of it. Another 26 acres are currently under development.

Among the biggest customers are California movie companies, who find the Kansas salt mines ideal for storing original film negatives along with all the out-takes from their productions.

"Journey to the Center of the Earth," "Gone With The Wind," "Ben Hur" and "Star Wars." All the Mash television episodes are stored down here, as are old silent movies. 20th Century Fox alone recently sent 22 truckloads of film to be stored here.

Thanks to Luis Adami & Joe Russo, for their assistance - and to Rory for the heads up on the Kansas salt mines.



