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# PLANET OF THE APES

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# MASTER

**Who else but Rick Baker would you call on to create a "Planet" full of simians?**

*Planet of the Apes' Number One makeups (like Michael Clarke Duncan's as Attar) weren't as restrictive as that armor probably was.*

Photo: Nels Israelson

**T**here are those who have come before and those who will come after, but there may never be anyone associated with as many different cinematic apes as special makeup designer Rick Baker.

The first of Baker's creatures to attack theaters was the gorilla-like missing link *Schlockthropus* in John Landis' 1971 comedy *Schlock!* Since then, Baker has won six Oscars for creating everything from werewolves to a realistic representation of Bela Lugosi to the Grinch, but he has returned to simians at regular intervals: 1976's *King Kong*

Photo: Scott Grier



Rick may be the only Baker who'd let animals roam around his workplace.



# OF THE APES

By ABBIE BERNSTEIN

As Krull, Cary Hiroyuki Tagawa doesn't just rely on his brute strength.

Photo: Nels Israelson

Ape leader Thade went through changes in both species (gorilla to chimp) and performer (Gary Oldman to Tim Roth).

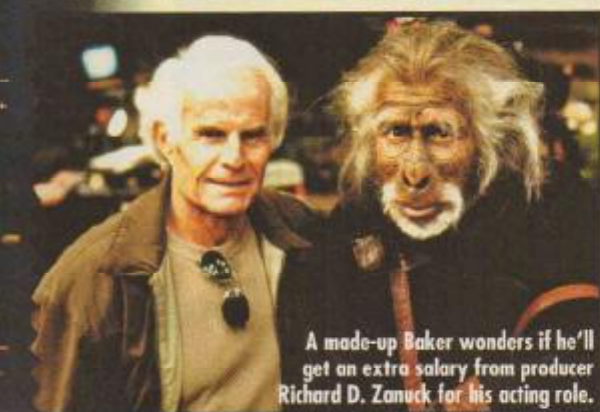
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Photo: Sam Emerson

Ape Photos: Copyright 2001 Fox



Unlike the original *Apes*, the new film had actor-specific designs created for the likes of Ron and David Warner.



A made-up Baker wonders if he'll get an extra salary from producer Richard D. Zanuck for his acting role.

very quick test on myself. I literally sculpted it in a day and then made a mold and put it on. It looked very promising."

However, the result was disappointment—through no fault of Baker's makeup. "I was calling to show them what I thought [the makeup] should be and they weren't taking my calls," Baker laughs ruefully. "I found out that the movie was going to be [an Arnold Schwarzenegger] vehicle, and [makeup FX designer] Stan Winston and Arnold are buddies. Basically, Arnold said, 'I want my friend to do it.'"

However, Stone, Schwarzenegger and Winston all eventually left the project. After that, Baker recalls that the film went through a number of other hands. "I got a call from Chris Columbus," he remembers, "who said, 'We've heard you did a [makeup] test. Can you come in and show us?' I think he just wanted to see what his options were. I basically said, 'No.' It was like, I did this test on my own time with my own money. I'm not gonna tell you how to do your movie and then have you turn around and use somebody else."

By the time *Apes* resurfaced yet again in 2000, this time with Burton



remake (with Baker inside the suit), the 1984 *Greystoke: The Legend of Tarzan, Lord of the Apes*, 1988's biopic *Gorillas in the Mist* and *Mighty Joe Young* in 1998 are only the best-known of his ape credits.

It's no surprise, therefore, that Baker has wound up creating a world full of gorillas, chimpanzees and orangutans for the new version of *Planet of the Apes*, based on the Pierre Boulle novel originally filmed in 1968 (winning John Chambers a special Oscar for his then-groundbreaking makeup) about a lost astronaut who finds a society run by anti-human, civilized talking simians. In fact, Baker's involvement with the project predates that of director Tim Burton by quite some time.

The artist recalls that his first contact with the remake came about eight years ago, when Oliver Stone was going to make the *Apes* redux for 20th Century Fox. "They called and said they thought I was the perfect person to do it—the only person in the world' is what they said, as a matter of fact—and I said, 'I agree,'" Baker laughs, adding that from the beginning, his goal was to utilize appliances instead of animatronics. "I thought, 'It's definitely got to be a makeup approach.' I threw out the idea of doing any radio-controlled lip mechanisms, because I felt it would distract from the performances. I started thinking of the old [*Apes*] makeups and came up with a new way of doing it that I thought would be a lot more expressive, and did a

set to direct, Baker wasn't looking to work on it—or anything else. "I had wrapped on both *Grinch* and *Nutty Professor II*," he explains, "and had actually closed up shop. They were really hard to do at the same time, both were really big and during the course of *The Grinch*, I lost my mother. I just thought, 'I need to take some time to be with myself and connect with my family and not have the stress.' I was going to take a year off," he laughs, "and then Tim called up."

While Baker had previously worked with Burton on *Ed Wood*, he admits to having some initial reservations about the new *Apes* outing. "Tim's great, but he's got a very definite style that I didn't know would suit *Apes* if he went with his black-and-white checkerboard, striped socks, dark circles around the eyes, sticky-uppy hair kind of style. I said, 'If that's what you want, I don't want to do it.' I told him what I wanted to do. We were both in agreement on so many things about the movie, what should be in it—we were both getting each other worked up and excited. So I said, 'I can't turn this down.'"

Doing the movie meant literally going ape in terms of trying to get a vast amount of work done in a relatively short time. Baker notes with a wry chuckle, "It was, 'We need you to make 500 apes and we're going to start filming it in three months.' If I hadn't just had the experience on *The Grinch*, where we had so many makeups for so long and got to

know a whole bunch of new artists and what they could do, I would have turned it down. On *Apes*, there are fewer of what we call Number One makeups and more background mask guys, so even though we had scenes with more characters in them [than on *Grinch*] on a daily basis, we didn't need as many artists."

There was a hierarchy to the makeup designs, Baker explains. "A Number One was a custom makeup where we took a life cast of the actor, sculpted and designed for their face specifically and a new set of appliances was used every day. The Number Twos were foam rubber head masks that weren't sculpted on a specific performer, but I came up with a way we could alter them to fit the actor properly, especially around the eyes, and it would slip over the head and strap on to snug it up, with black paint around the eyes. They couldn't do as much as a Number One, but they could do more than a Number Three, which was basically a slip rubber mask."

The new ape appliances had extraordinary flexibility, and Baker credits this in part to their substance: "Our foam is so much softer [than what was used in the first *Apes*]. My foam rubber department is run by Roland Blancaflor—I've never had foam come out like this guy gets. The appliances articulate pretty well, the lower lip more than the upper, because the upper has more foam. But people will be amazed. Sometimes the brow, muzzle





Photo: David James

and cheekbones are pretty much all one piece [with a separate] chin piece. Other times the brows are separate, the muzzle is separate and the ears are separate. In the case of a gorilla or orangutan, there's a cowl kind of piece with the [gorilla head] crest or [orangutan] cheekpads."

The amount of Number One makeups kept increasing as principal photography loomed. "What you really want to see is a bunch of talking, moving apes," Baker points out. "You don't want to see a bunch of masks. I think there were only like 15 principal [Number One-wearing] guys originally. What happened was, because I knew it wasn't going to be enough, when I had spare time or when I had sculptors with some down time, we did a lot of generic ape makeups—we took the life casts of actors we had and did different-looking apes on them, and we ended up using those a lot."

As a result, some performers selected early on for smaller roles wound up with bigger jobs. "I suggested we get some guys for Number Twos so we could start [working on those, while waiting for the leads to be cast]," Baker remembers, "and we had some big casting calls. I found a number of people I thought were really good. One of them, Kevin Greivoux, is a big guy and has this amazing deep voice. I thought, 'Boy, that voice would sound great coming out of a gorilla—all the gorillas should sound like this guy.' I showed him to Tim and said, 'Let's make

him a Number One.' Kevin ended up playing at least half a dozen different apes in the movie. A number of people ended up doing things like that."

Finally, the main actors were cast in the leading ape roles, some only weeks before the start of filming. The villainous General Thade was initially supposed to be portrayed by Gary Oldman, but Tim Roth wound up with the part. Helena Bonham Carter plays Ari, an upper-class chimp who sympathizes with humans; Cary-Hiroyuki Tagawa plays her loyal gorilla servant Krull; Michael Clarke Duncan is the gorilla warrior Attar; and Paul Giamatti is the orangutan merchant Limbo. Baker took it upon himself to personally explain to the leads how the makeup worked.

"I was pleased with the professionalism of all the actors," Baker says. "It's a case of, 'You knew the job was dangerous before you took it.' Before we made the life casts, I showed them the teeth, I showed them the appliances, I showed them video of people in them. I put the [denturelike] teeth in and showed them how it affected your speech, how you had to practice talking with them."

Baker further recalls telling the cast, "It's going to be early morning calls, and the very first thing, some joker like me will be slapping glue on your face and telling you not to talk [while being made up] and poking you all day long, and do you really want to do this?' Everybody

said, 'Yes.' They all came in and sat in the chair and dealt with the procedure and didn't really bitch and moan about it. It was very pleasant—for me," he clarifies with a laugh. "I don't know how pleasant it was for them."

Baker sculpted many of the gorillas himself, along with preliminary sculptures for other apes. "A lot of the initial stuff I sculpted was before we had our main guys. Michael Clarke Duncan was the key principal I did [as a final sculpture]. Kazuhiro Tsuji was more of our chimp guy—he had a better handle on chimps. I sculpted the Gary Oldman makeup, when he was originally cast as Thade. But when they hired Tim, I did a quick computer sketch, then gave Kazu that sketch and the cast of the Oldman head and said, 'Make it kind of like this.' " Tsuji applied Roth's prosthetics during production, and Baker sees him as a major makeup FX figure of the future: "Kazu has an amazing talent and he's a very dedicated, hard worker, and that's what it takes."

As for the size of the *Apes* makeup crew, "We probably had 30 people at least," Baker says. "Toni G. ran the department with Alex Proctor. Toni applied Helena's makeup. I had Lance Anderson apply Michael Clarke Duncan, Gabriel DeCunto did Cary Tagawa. Bill Corso did Paul Giamatti—he also put on Charlton's makeup."

Yes, Charlton Heston, who starred in



Once prosthetics achieved the look, ape movement coach Terry Notary (with Carter and Giamatti) helped the actors behave like animals.

Photo: Sam Emerson



the 1968 *Apes* as the misanthropic astronaut Taylor, has a cameo in the new film as Thade's chimp father. "I was there when we were making him up to let him know that I cared," Baker says, "and since it was the one and only time we got to do that makeup, I really was involved in making sure it looked the way I wanted it to look."

This was among a number of small *Apes* tasks that Baker did unpaid out of love for the project. "The Heston makeup was a last-minute thing," the artist explains. "They said, 'You know, Rick, we want Charlton Heston to play an ape.' And they told me what the scene was, and I said, 'That's really cool.' 'But the problem is, we don't have any more money.' 'So, you're asking me to do Charlton Heston's makeup for free?' And they said, 'Yeah.' 'All right.' So I gave it to them." He laughs, adding that the makeup budget "was several million dollars, but the movie's over \$100 million."

"There were days when the script said we needed a young gorilla," he continues. "That [makeup was] not in our budget. They said, 'We'll just use a Number Three mask.' But the young gorilla had dialogue—we couldn't use a mask. So I just made the young gorilla, because I didn't want it to be a Number Three. Many of the generic things [in the movie] were basically free gifts from Rick. They knew that I'm a real geek about this stuff and I like the work to be good, and we managed to do a lot more than what we were budgeted to do."

When filming commenced, Baker was initially on set all day every day to ensure everything ran smoothly. "Once it got to where it was like a well-oiled machine," he says, "there were days where I would show up just to see that the makeup

looked fine, but I didn't stay there necessarily all day, 'cause I had a group of professionals who could deal with it." He remained ready to leap into action when needed: "One day when Cary Tagawa was running through the jungle set, he had a branch swipe across his face and rip a chunk of his [gorilla] nose off. We brought him into the makeup trailer—it was a hurry situation—and I just had to do an old-fashioned cotton-and-latex thing, the way I did some makeups when I was a kid, kind of filling in this hole and retexturing it and patching it up. It worked pretty well."

Generally, durability of the Number One pieces wasn't a concern. "It was a new appliance every day," Baker says. "There were occasions where there'd be a little slice in the foam and we could usually glue it back together. We were more concerned about our Number Twos, which we'd use over and over again."

During *Apes*' production, Baker began designing creatures for the upcoming *Men in Black 2* on his laptop. "I love working on my computer—when it works," he raves. "In the old days, I used to draw on paper, or paint sometimes on acetate over a photo of an actor. A lot of times, I would not be satisfied that the painting I did was the vision I had in my head of the makeup, but the painting itself wasn't bad, so I would be afraid if I changed it, I would screw it up and not even have any design, just a ruined painting. For 12 years now, I've been doing designs on the computer. To be able to do a drawing, save it and know that I can always go back to it does away with any fear that I have of changing it, because I know it still exists. It has definitely freed me up a lot more. The biggest problem I have now is adding so many variations on a

theme. I'll find that instead of having one or two designs for a director to choose from, I'll have 100 to 200 designs."

Baker still has a wish list of creations he'd like to make. "I've always kind of wanted to do a *Wizard of Oz*-like fantasy, which *The Grinch* satisfied for me in a way. I'd like to do a big movie à la *The Lord of the Rings*." Baker couldn't work on the Peter Jackson trilogy in New Zealand: "I've got my studio here, my home and my children in school—I couldn't pack up and leave for two years."

While prepping *MIB2*, Baker found time to do an audio commentary with director John Landis for the upcoming DVD release of *Schlock!* (currently scheduled for release by Anchor Bay in August), but it's not clear when, if ever, that long vacation will happen. "I've kind of been kicking myself for taking *Men in Black 2*," Baker says. "It's like, 'What happened to the time off?' But since I did the first [*Men*], I didn't want to hand it over to somebody else, and they really wanted me to do it. Maybe [I'll take a vacation] after—it depends on what comes along. I took a year off after *Greystoke*, and it was probably one of the most miserable years of my life, and one of the least productive. I'm happiest, I think, besides when I'm with my kids and my family, when I'm creating something. During that [break after *Greystoke*], I had major plans. 'I'm going to do all these paintings, I'm going to do all these sculptures for myself, without anybody else's influence or anybody else's help,' and I pretty much just vegged out for a year. I produced a couple of paintings over the course of that year, and none of them were too good."

"Collaboration definitely does change what you do," he continues, "but deadlines too are a real reason to have to get up in the morning and do something. In the last week, I've probably done 20 different computer paintings. If I didn't have a deadline, I'm sure I wouldn't have produced that much stuff. Looking at all the stuff I did, I thought, 'Wow, look at all this, this is pretty cool.' And again, I'm having fun doing it."

The 1968 *Planet of the Apes* spawned four sequels, and "Fox is obviously hoping to have another series of *Apes* movies," Baker observes. He'd like to be involved if they do: "I just hope that if they do another one, they give us more time [to work on the makeup]. Most likely, they'll give us less time," he laughs. "I'm dying to see it. I hope it's going to be great. I just wish I'd had time to do more."