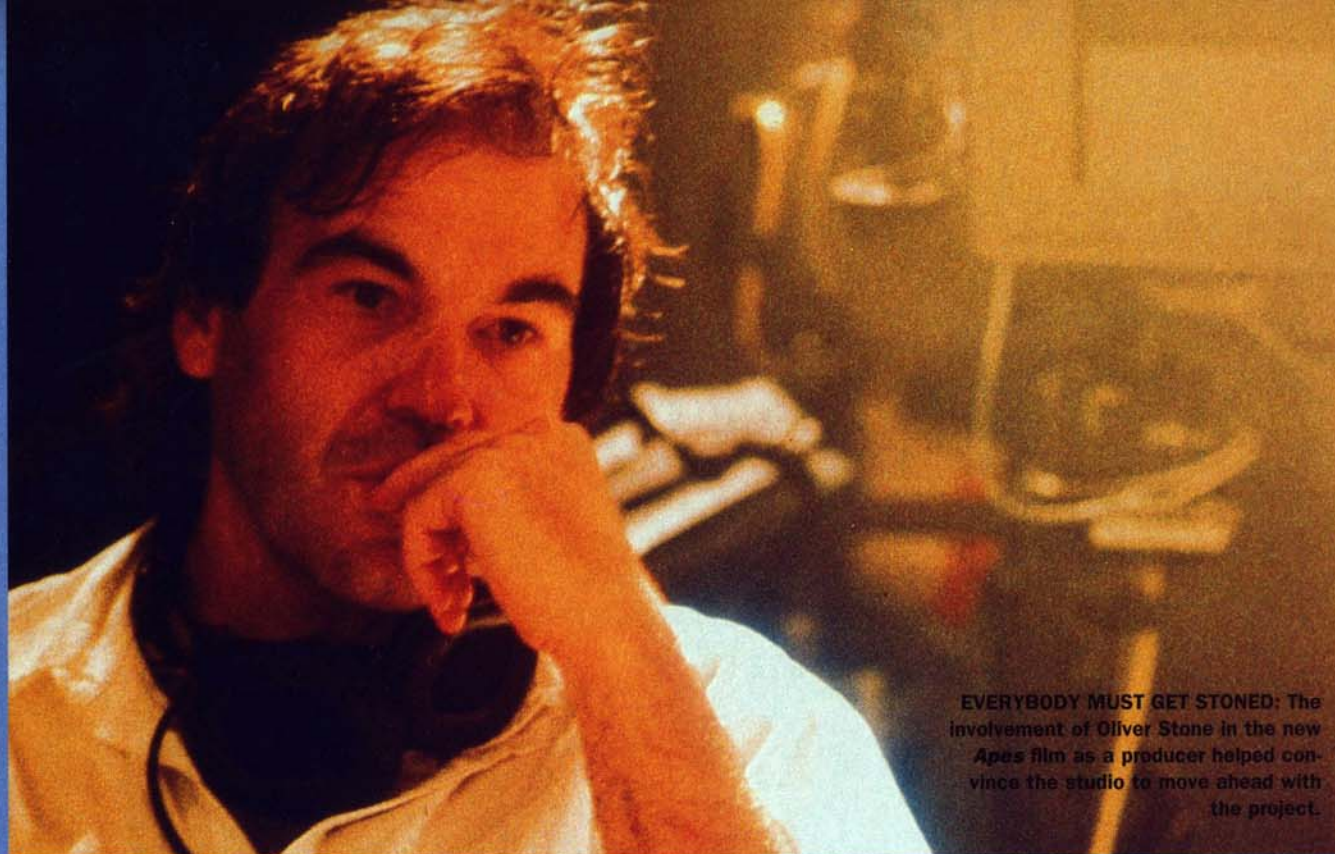


"The film starts out in present day, but is set mostly in the distant past, where it's discovered that the planet was once ruled by a superior, ancient ape culture," offers producer Don Murphy of the new **Planet of the Apes** script currently being written by Terry Hayes (**Road Warrior**, **Dead Calm**). "But it opens in the present with the end of mankind beginning as babies are being born dead. It's found that the cause is a genetic defect, one created at the dawn of time. So in order to solve the problem, a scientist goes back to the exact moment when this defect was created, actually through the DNA, which they use to time travel. It's not through a machine or anything, but very much like in **Altered States**."

"In a sense, he has to find Eve in the garden," explains Jane Hamsher, Murphy's producing partner.

For years, rumors regarding a revival of the **Planet of the Apes** series have been prevalent although repeated attempts to jumpstart the franchise were squelched by former 20th Century Fox studio head, Joe Roth. In one case, director and **Apes** fanatic Adam Rifkin (**The Dark Backward**, **The Chase**) wrote a script on spec trying to convince Roth to make a sequel entitled **Return to the Planet of the Apes: World At War**, a thinly-veiled retake on **Spartacus**, which was quickly consigned to the vast purgatory where rejected ideas go to die.

Since Roth's departure to Disney, JD Prods., the team of Hamsher and Murphy, has managed to convince Fox to make the first **Planet of the Apes** film in over 20 years. And while this may seem remarkable, the two conditions that made the deal possible will astound most **Apes** enthusiasts: the involvement of director



EVERYBODY MUST GET STONED: The involvement of Oliver Stone in the new **Apes** film as a producer helped convince the studio to move ahead with the project.

Oliver Stone as the executive producer of the project and the studio-mandate that the new film completely ignore the milieu of the five earlier **Apes** installments and instead return to Pierre Boulle's 1963 novella as basic source material for an entirely new take on the evolution-warping premise.

Says Murphy of this drastically new direction, "The first films were set in a future in which mankind has destroyed himself, but ours is actually set in **Quest For Fire** times, the dawn of man. It has very Biblical, mythic overtones. It isn't the sixth movie in the series—or a remake of the first one—but a reinvention of the concept of the **Planet of the Apes** using nineties technology and a completely new story."

While the story laid out by Murphy and Hamsher is radically differ-

ent from the 1968 version of **Apes** and will surely shock some fans as much as the casting of Michael Keaton in **Batman** did in 1988, those who endearingly remember the then-advanced ape make-ups from the original films may be equally stunned. Gone will be the semi-humanoid-only-kind-of-monkey-like concept—and in its place will be another vision, according to Murphy.

"The approach we're going to take will be more like **Gorillas in the Mist**. There are going to be people in the suits, but they do not look like people—they look like apes of a simian culture. It's going to be **Gorillas in the Mist** meets **The Terminator**—a humongous rethinking of the entire concept."

But with all this rethinking, why not simply begin from completely

original material as opposed to straying into what could be considered by some to be The Sequel Zone?

"I always thought the concept of **Planet of the Apes** would rock, but I did not want anything to do with the old series," says Murphy who, with Hamsher, produced Oliver Stone's upcoming frenetic satire **Natural Born Killers** for Warner Bros. "That has already been done. The concept of apes and humans together is simply a cool pretext for a good action film.

"How many generations of kids have grown up since the first **Planet of the Apes**? Three? Five? Seven? There is nothing wrong with taking a good concept and updating it. If I was to take **Tarzan** now, I would put a twist on it that nobody had seen before, like [Hugh Hudson]



Unlike the famous John Chambers prosthetics of the original, new **Apes** producer Don Murphy says the new film will feature ape costumes similar to that of Rick Baker's designs for **Greystoke**, as depicted above.

All photos © 20th Century Fox/Courtesy of Joe Russo & Larry

did with **Greystoke**. In that film they introduced him as a prince when he returned to civilization. That's what you have to do.

"I know there are a lot of fans of the original film series out there," continues Murphy. "And that they will be offended—but if you watch most of those films, they're dated. What is cool is that **Apes** does have a following—but you cannot make a motion picture today with a cult following. We are not making the reinvented **Planet of the Apes** to appeal to the hundred or thousand people who cannot get enough of the **Apes** marathons once a year when some channel like TNT runs them. We're going to make it so it appeals to forty million people who want to see what could easily be the next **Jurassic Park**. This movie is going to be an epic—a major summer blockbuster, and you get very few of those. Kenner has already signed up to do the toys. We do not even have a script, and they are already designing toys—go figure. It's going to be a humongous flick."

"It's going to be **Gorillas in the Mist** meets **The Terminator**—a humongous rethinking of the entire concept."

Aside from the bombast, the film more interestingly includes the unspecified spiritual and cultural elements of Stone's that interested 20th Century Fox in the first place. "Science fiction has always been the best place to deal with the present on an allegorical level," says Hamsher. "And many of the ideas Oliver has for **Apes** couldn't be done, at least not by him, in some more traditional format or genre. This film isn't just a marketing strategy or vehicle, but a real analysis of today."

The tone of Fox's announced animated **Apes** project, which won't be unveiled until after the feature film, will be taken in the same direction as Stone's, much like **Batman: The Animated Series** depended on Tim Burton's vision. According to Hamsher, the new **Apes** will begin shooting this fall for release in the summer of 1995, but no director has yet been attached. "We have a wish list," she says candidly. "But right now that's just fantasy, at least until we have a finished script."