

Short Review: “Beneath the Planet of the Apes” (1969) by Dr. John L. Flynn



Beneath the Planet of the Apes (1969). 20th Century Fox, 94 min. Director: Ted Post. Producer: Arthur P. Jacobs. Screenwriters: Paul Dehn and Mort Abrahams. Cast: James Franciscus, Charlton Heston, Kim Hunter, Maurice Evans, Linda Harrison, Victor Buono, James Gregory, and Jeff Corey.

In the first and best of the four sequels to “Planet of the Apes” (1968), Brent (Franciscus) is sent to find missing astronaut Taylor (Heston), and crash lands on the same planet where intelligent apes rule over savage humans. He is captured, but escapes to the Forbidden Zone with Nova (Harrison), followed by an angry army of gorillas bent on wiping man out for good. There, in the forgotten, subterranean ruins of New York City, Brent meets mutant humans who practice mind control and worship a doomsday bomb capable of destroying the entire planet. Tension mounts to a climactic and cataclysmic battle between ape and man deep in the bowels of Manhattan. While the satire of the original has been traded for some cool action scenes, a few key ingredients keep the production from being a straight adventure tale—most notably a tip of the proverbial hat to Walter M. Miller’s A Canticle for Leibowitz as a form of motivation for the mutant humans and their worship of the bomb. Harrison still looks good in her animal skins!

And despite the fact that Heston's Taylor destroys the world in the final reel, more Ape films were to follow.

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