

Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes

Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes is a 2024 American science fiction action film directed by Wes Ball and written by Josh Friedman. A stand-alone sequel to War for the Planet of the Apes (2017), it is the fourth installment in the Planet of the Apes reboot franchise and the tenth film overall. It stars Owen Teague in the lead role alongside Freya Allan, Kevin Durand, Peter Macon, and William H. Macy. The film takes place 300 years after the events of War and follows a young chimpanzee named Noa, who embarks on a journey alongside a human woman named Mae to determine the future for apes and humans alike.

Development on a new Planet of the Apes film began in April 2019, following Disney's acquisition of 20th Century Fox, with Ball attached as writer and director that December. Much of the script was written during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, with casting commencing in June 2022, following the script's completion. Teague was cast in the lead role that August, with the film's title and additional casting revealed in the following months. Principal photography began in October 2022 in Sydney and wrapped in February 2023.

Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes premiered at the TCL Chinese Theatre in Los Angeles on May 2, 2024, and was released by 20th Century Studios in the United States on May 10. The film received generally positive reviews from critics and has grossed over \$240 million worldwide, becoming the eighth-highest-grossing film of 2024.

Plot

Many generations after Caesar's death, apes have established numerous clans, while humans have become feral. Noa, a chimpanzee from a falconry-practicing clan, prepares for a coming-of-age ceremony by collecting eagle eggs with his friends Anaya and Soona. However, a human scavenger follows Noa home and inadvertently cracks his egg during a scuffle before fleeing. While searching for a replacement egg, Noa encounters a group of ape raiders using electric weapons. As Noa hides from them, the apes follow his horse back to his clan. Noa hurries home to find his village burning; the raider leader Sylva kills Noa's father before dropping Noa from a high platform.

Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes



Theatrical release poster

Directed by	Wes Ball
Written by	Josh Friedman
Based on	Characters by Rick Jaffa Amanda Silver Premise from Planet of the Apes by Pierre Boulle
Produced by	Wes Ball Joe Hartwick Jr. Rick Jaffa Amanda Silver Jason T. Reed
Starring	Owen Teague Freya Allan Kevin Durand Peter Macon

Left for dead, Noa awakens, discovering that his clan has been abducted. He buries his father and sets out to rescue his clan. On his journey, he is joined by Raka, an orangutan who tells Noa about Caesar's teachings. The apes notice they are being followed by the human scavenger; Raka offers her food and a blanket, naming her Nova. When the trio encounters a group of feral humans, Sylva's raiders suddenly attack. Noa and Raka rescue Nova who, to their surprise, can speak. She reveals that her name is Mae and that the raiders took Noa's clan to a beachfront settlement outside an old human vault. As they cross a bridge on their way to the settlement, they are ambushed by Sylva. In the ensuing fight, Raka saves Mae from drowning but is swept away by the rapids. Noa and Mae are captured and taken to the apes' settlement.

Noa reunites with his clan and is introduced to the apes' self-proclaimed king, Proximus Caesar. Proximus has enslaved other clans, forcing them to work on opening the vault so he can access the human technology locked inside. Proximus invites Noa to dinner along with Mae and Trevathan, a human prisoner who has accepted his status and is teaching Proximus about the old human world, especially Ancient Rome. Proximus believes that Noa's intelligence could help open the vault and warns him that Mae only has her own interests in mind. Noa confronts Mae, demanding the truth in exchange for his help. Mae discloses knowledge of a hidden entrance to the vault and says that a mysterious "book" capable of restoring speech to humanity is inside. Noa agrees to help her enter the vault, hoping to destroy Proximus' settlement and lead his clan back home. Noa, Mae, Soona, and Anaya secretly plant explosives around the levee that surrounds the settlement. Trevathan catches them and intends to warn Proximus, but Mae kills him.

The group enters the vault, which is revealed to be a military bunker housing a stockpile of weapons as well as Mae's "book," which is actually a deciphering key for a satellite. The apes discover old picture books depicting humans as the once-dominant species and apes in cages at a zoo. As the group makes their way out of the bunker, they are confronted by Proximus and his tribe. One of Proximus' apes threatens to kill Soona, but Mae kills him with a gun she found. Proximus excitedly tells Mae that she can leave if she tells him where the other guns are. Mae refuses and triggers the explosives, flooding the bunker with the apes inside. Mae flees the settlement while the apes climb to higher ground through the bunker. Noa is pursued by Sylva, but Noa traps and drowns him. Noa escapes the bunker with his clan, but he is attacked by Proximus. Noa leads his clan in summoning their eagles to attack Proximus and send him falling off a cliff into the sea.

As Noa's clan returns to rebuild their home, Mae arrives to bid farewell to Noa. She explains that humans deserve another chance since they were once the dominant species, but Noa questions if apes and humans can coexist peacefully. As Noa takes Soona to look through a telescope he found on his journey, Mae

	<u>William H. Macy</u>
Cinematography	<u>Gyula Pados</u>
Edited by	<u>Dan Zimmerman</u>
Music by	<u>John Paesano</u>
Production companies	Oddball Entertainment Jason T. Reed Productions
Distributed by	<u>20th Century Studios</u>
Release dates	May 2, 2024 (<u>TCL Chinese Theatre</u>) May 10, 2024 (United States)
Running time	145 minutes ^[1]
Country	United States
Language	English
Budget	\$160 million ^[2]
Box office	\$242.9 million ^{[3][4]}

travels to a human settlement at a satellite base, which is kept quarantined from the outside world. Mae delivers the decipher key, allowing the humans to reactivate the satellites and successfully contact other humans worldwide.

Cast

Apes

- Owen Teague as Noa, a chimpanzee hunter and the heir to his ape clan led by his father Koro
- Kevin Durand as Proximus Caesar, an ambitious bonobo monarch who leads a coastal clan of apes in search of human technology and preaches an altered version of Caesar's teachings^{[8][9][10]}
- Peter Macon as Raka, a wise and virtuous Bornean orangutan who becomes an ally of Noa^{[8][11]}
- Lydia Peckham^[12] as Soona, a female chimpanzee and Noa's love interest^[13]
- Travis Jeffery^[12] as Anaya, a male chimpanzee and Noa's best friend^[13]
- Sara Wiseman^[12] as Dar, Noa's chimpanzee mother
- Neil Sandilands^[12] as Koro, Noa's chimpanzee father and the leader of the falconry ape clan^[14]
- Eka Darville as Sylva, a western lowland gorilla and chief commander of Proximus' army^{[15][16]}
- Ras-Samuel^[12] as Lightning, a chimpanzee soldier of Proximus' army

Additionally, Karin Konoval appears in the prologue as Maurice, the Bornean orangutan from the previous films.^[17]

Humans

- Freya Allan as Mae,^[18] a young woman who joins Noa on his journey while having an agenda of her own.^[8] She is given the name "Nova" by Noa and Raka, a reference to the character of the same name from *War for the Planet of the Apes*, both of which were a reference to the original film, which *Kingdom* establishes as since having become an ape name for trusted humans
- William H. Macy as Trevathan,^[19] an opportunistic human who styles himself as Proximus Caesar's chief advisor and teaches him human history^[20]
- Dichen Lachman^[21] as Korina, leader of the human satellite base

Production

Pre-production and writing

In October 2016, *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* (2014) and *War for the Planet of the Apes* (2017) director Matt Reeves said that he had ideas for a fourth film in the *Planet of the Apes* reboot series.^[22] In mid-2017, as *War* was released, Reeves and co-writer Mark Bomback expressed further interest in sequels. Reeves said that Steve Zahn's character, Bad Ape, established a primate world "much larger" than just Caesar's

group of apes, adding that there are apes "who grew up without the benefit of Caesar's leadership" and suggesting that conflict would arise if Caesar's apes should encounter such outsiders.^[23] Bomback felt that "there was probably only one more big chapter left to tell", explaining how Caesar "came to be this *Moses* figure in the *Apes* world". He suggested that other filmmakers might work on the sequel and that it could take place hundreds of years after *War*. Despite this, he clarified that there had not been conversations on a potential sequel, expressing his desire to "take a breather and let things rest a bit."^[24]

In April 2019, following the Walt Disney Company's acquisition of 20th Century Fox, Walt Disney Studios announced that further *Planet of the Apes* films were in development.^[25] In August, it was confirmed that any future installments would be set in the same universe first established in *Rise of the Planet of the Apes* (2011).^[26] In December, it was announced that Wes Ball would write and direct the film,^[27] after having previously worked with Reeves on a film adaptation of *Mouse Guard*. After that film was canceled by Disney following the merger, the studio approached Ball on developing a new *Planet of the Apes* film.^[28]

In February 2020, Ball confirmed that the film would not be a reboot, instead chronicling "Caesar's legacy".^[29] Joe Hartwick Jr. and David Starke were also confirmed to serve as producers.^[30] In April, it was announced that Peter Chernin, who produced the previous installments through Chernin Entertainment, would serve as executive producer. The film will be one of the company's last films before it leaves 20th Century for Netflix.^[31] The next month, it was revealed that Josh Friedman would co-write the script with Ball, and that Rick Jaffa and Amanda Silver would return to produce the film after doing so for the previous installments. Ball and Friedman would discuss the script through Zoom video calls, a routine which continued as the COVID-19 pandemic began. Instead of a direct sequel to *War*, Ball stated that the film would feel more like a follow-up to the previous films, and commented that the film could begin virtual production soon in spite of the pandemic due to the fact that much of the film contained computer-generated imagery (CGI).^[32]

In March 2022, 20th Century president Steve Asbell stated that he was expecting a screenplay draft shortly, aiming for production to begin by the end of the year.^[33] By June, Oddball Entertainment and Shinbone Productions were also set to produce the film,^{[34][35]} while the search for the main star was underway following the script's completion the previous month.^[36] The film's title was revealed to be *Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes* in September 2022, with the film revealed to take place many years after the events of *War*. Jaffa, Silver, and Patrick Aison joined the writing team, with Ball no longer credited as screenwriter. Jason Reed and Jenno Topping were also announced as producer and executive producer, respectively, while Starke was no longer expected to serve as producer.^[11]

Ball stated the film was set during the "Dark Ages", where the apes rediscover lost items from the past in "this grand adventure"; *Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes* takes place 300 years following Caesar's death. He felt the protagonist Noa was neither a child nor adult, but a figure placed in "extraordinary" circumstances and living in a nomadic ape tribe. Teague also stated that Noa doesn't have a self-perception of identity but was inspired by Caesar's legacy and message of "apes together strong". He compared the antagonist, Proximus, to that of inventor Thomas Edison as he had rediscovered electricity, which was knowledge lost during the Dark Ages. Durand felt that the name Proximus Caesar was a self-proclaimed title, as his goal was to ensure the continued prosperity of apes despite subverting Caesar's original teachings.^{[7][13]} He had the idea to change the timeframe after taking inspiration from the film *Apocalypto* (2006), as it had provided him an opportunity for a "whole new trajectory". Hartwick Jr. stated that the film was focusing on Noa exploring the world for the first time.^[37]

Ball intended for what Noa, Mae, and Soona saw through the telescope in the middle and end of the film would remain ambiguous, saying, "I figured there is nothing I could show you that would be stronger than what the audience's imagination would conjure up...Sure, it might turn some people off, but some people will like it. I have ideas of what they're looking at...Space obviously is a key idea in all of these movies. So, maybe it's them looking to the future?"^[38]

Casting

In August 2022, Owen Teague joined the cast of the film in the lead motion-capture role.^[39] The next month, Freya Allan and Peter Macon joined the cast with the announcement of the film's title and release year,^[11] as did Eka Darville and Kevin Durand in October.^{[9][15]} Travis Jeffery, Neil Sandilands, Sara Wiseman, Lydia Peckham and Ras-Samuel Weld A'abzgi were added to the cast later that month,^[12] while William H. Macy and Dichen Lachman were cast in January and February 2023, respectively.^{[21][20]}

After being cast, Teague began to volunteer and study the animals at the Center for Great Apes in Florida. At first, he studied chimpanzees as a whole to see their typical day and examine how they move. However, he was drawn to a specific chimp, Bentley. It was Bentley's curious nature that made Teague resonate with him. Teague says it was Bentley that inspired how he developed the character of Noa as an actor.^[40]

Filming

Principal photography began in October 2022 at Disney Studios Australia in Sydney, with funding partially provided by the Australian Government,^[41] under the working title *Forbidden Zone*. Filming concluded on February 15, 2023.^[42] Ball added filming primarily occurred on location alongside using motion-capture technology.^[43]

Post-production and visual effects

Erik Winquist served as the visual effects supervisor, with vendors including Wētā FX, which had previously done work on the prior three *Planet of the Apes* reboot films.^[44] Ball stated the film did not use The Volume technology, which had previously been employed for *The Mandalorian*, focusing on filming on-location and using full CG. He went on to compare the film's CG to that of James Cameron's Avatar franchise.^[45] The team used techniques for their previous film *Avatar: The Way of Water* (2022) when working on an action sequence involving a human-hunt taking place on rivers. This was due to requiring the CG models of apes based on motion-capture performances to appear realistic when interacting with water.^[37]

Music

John Paesano, who had previously collaborated with Ball on the *Maze Runner* film trilogy (2014–2018), composed the film score for *Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes*. Paesano incorporated Jerry Goldsmith's original themes from the 1968 film within the score, describing it as "the musical legacy".^[46] The soundtrack was released by Hollywood Records on May 10, 2024.^[47]

Release

Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes held its world premiere at the TCL Chinese Theatre in Los Angeles on May 2, 2024,^[48] followed by an early access screening on May 8.^[49] It was released in the United States on May 10, 2024, in both conventional theaters and in IMAX, Dolby Cinema, 4DX, and ScreenX.^[50] The film was previously set for release on May 24,^[51] but was rescheduled two weeks earlier to avoid competition with *Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga* and *The Garfield Movie* during Memorial Day weekend.^[50]

Marketing

A teaser trailer was released on November 2, 2023.^{[8][52]} Bryan Britt of *Inverse* compared the film's premise to that of the original *Planet of the Apes* film from 1968.^[53] A second trailer premiered during Super Bowl LVIII on February 11, 2024.^{[54][55]} As part of a viral marketing campaign in California, actors wearing realistic ape costumes were dispatched on horseback to Venice Beach and Crissy Field in April 2024.^{[56][57]} This campaign extended to the New York City Metropolitan area as similar actors on horseback were seen at Liberty State Park with the Manhattan skyline and Statue of Liberty in the background.^[58]

Reception

Box office

As of May 22, 2024, *Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes* has grossed \$106 million in the United States and Canada and \$136.9 million in other territories, for a worldwide total of \$242.9 million.^{[3][4]}

In the United States and Canada, *Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes* was projected to gross \$50–55 million from 4,075 theaters in its opening weekend.^{[2][59]} The film made \$22.2 million on its first day, including \$6.6 million from preview screenings (\$1.6 million on Wednesday and \$5 million on Thursday).^[60] It went on to debut to \$58.5 million, topping the box office and marking the third-best opening weekend of the franchise behind *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* (\$72.4 million in 2014) and *Planet of the Apes* (\$68.5 million in 2001).^{[61][62]} In its second weekend, the film made \$25.7 million (a drop of 56%), finishing second behind newcomer *IF*.^[63]

Outside the U.S., *Kingdom* was projected to debut to \$80–90 million.^[2] It ended up making \$72.7 million, for a worldwide opening of \$129 million, with the largest markets being China (\$11.4 million), France (\$7.1 million), Mexico (\$6.4 million), the United Kingdom (\$4.8 million), South Korea (\$3.2 million), Australia (\$2.7 million), Brazil (\$2.6 million), Germany (\$2.2 million), and Spain (\$2.2 million).^[64]

Critical response

According to the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, critics described the film as having "*Avatar*-level visual effects", complemented by "standout performances and top-notch action", although "it doesn't quite meet the heights of its predecessors."^[65] On the website, 81% of 283 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 7/10. The site's critics consensus reads: "Carving out a new era for *The Planet of the Apes* with lovable characters and rich visuals, *Kingdom* doesn't take the crown as best of the franchise but handily justifies its continued reign."^[66] Metacritic, which uses a weighted average, assigned the film a score of 66 out of 100, based on 57 critics, indicating "generally favorable" reviews.^[67] Audiences polled by CinemaScore gave the film an average grade of "B" on an A+ to F scale, down from the "A−" earned by the three previous films, while those polled by PostTrak gave it a 77% overall positive score.^{[60][68]}

Writing for *The New York Times*, critic Alissa Wilkinson called the film "uncommonly thoughtful, even insightful".^[69] Tyler Bur of *The Washington Post* praised the film's visuals, describing the computer generated primates as "breathtakingly hyper-real". However, Bur criticized the human characters as "two-dimensional", including Mae, who he viewed as a "plot device more than a human being".^[70] Clarisse Loughrey of *The Independent* called the film "traditional and robustly crafted, in a way that's deferential less to the trends of today than to some half-remembered dream of Hollywood's classical epics."^[71]

Charles Pulliam-Moore of *The Verge* disliked the tendency of the plot to lay the ground for "sequels down the line [rather] than to really dig into the substance at hand".^[72] Jake Wilson of *The Age* gave it 2/5 stars, writing, "Plainly, this is not a movie to be taken too seriously, but at nearly two-and-a-half hours, it's also much too slow and ponderous to qualify as a campy good time."^[73] A review for the BBC criticized the fact that the film repeats various elements of the precedent instalment, stating, "If you have seen *War for the Planet of the Apes* (2017), the final instalment of the Caesar trilogy, you might be astonished at how derivative the last stretch of *Kingdom* is. Once again, a ruthless leader holds apes prisoner in an abandoned weapons depot. This time everything is rusted from age and the ruler is Proximus instead of Woody Harrelson's Colonel, but still."^[74]

Future

In June 2022, it was reported that Disney and 20th Century planned for *Kingdom* to be the first of a new trilogy of *Planet of the Apes* films.^[36] Wes Ball confirmed this in December 2023, explaining that the film had been conceived as the beginning of a trilogy that "fit into the legacy of" the previous three films.^[7] Rick Jaffa and Amanda Silver also expressed interest in making a third trilogy of films, thus bringing the total of the *Planet of the Apes* reboot films to nine.^[75]

Notes

- a. As depicted in *War for the Planet of the Apes* (2017). The film does not specify the number of years, but it is reported to be about 300 years after Caesar's death.^[7]

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External links

- Official website (<https://www.20thcenturystudios.com/movies/kingdom-of-the-planet-of-the-apes>)
 - Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt11389872/>) at IMDb
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