

BEVERLY GARLAND

Wanda *'The Interrogation'*



Art by
Glen Scheetz

Actress Beverly Garland's body of work - 41 feature films and nearly 700 television shows - is perhaps unmatched in Hollywood for its diversity and scope.

Since making her film debut in "D.O.A.", the 1950 suspense classic, Ms. Garland has starred in a wide variety of movies and TV programs which have won her many honours including a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, career achievement awards from Universities and industry organisations, and an Emmy Award nomination for "Best Dramatic Actress".

Ms. Garland starred in some of TV's most prestigious dramas, such as "Playhouse 90" and "Ford Theatre", made numerous guest appearances in dramatic series and starred as a regular in "Decoy", in which she made television history in 1957 by becoming the first actress to play the title role of a dramatic series, as well as television's first policewoman.

In 1974 Beverly was forever embraced by the hearts and minds of Ape fans everywhere for her sensational performance as the big, bad 'Wanda' in the fan-favourite episode 'The Interrogation'.

Dean Preston almost promises to get the answers*

**with a little help from Cassidy Rae*

How did you get the part of 'Wanda'?

The casting director was Marvin Paige. He called me and said he liked my work on "Decoy", the policewoman series I did in 1957, and asked if I was interested in the part of Wanda, the doctor. I had seen the "Planet of the Apes" movies, and they were already considered classics - so my decision to be a part of the TV series didn't take long - about half a second!

When you were approached to play 'Wanda', was the subject of 'psychological pressures' (of being confined within full make-up for many hours at a time) discussed, and, if so - at what length?

No, we were never discussed the idea of "psychological pressures". The full make-up was not easy to work in all day - but, it was a challenge I enjoyed.

Are there any difficulties for one actor relating to another when wearing appliances?

I had one. What surprised me was the intensity of the preparation. I quickly learned apes and humans walked differently. Several days before shooting we were called to Fox and segments from earlier scenes showing how apes walk were screened to us. After some instructions we all

had to get up and have our 'ape walk' graded and we were not excused until we were all perfect.

Then we went to make-up for measurements for all the rubber prostheses for the whole face - forehead, cheek bones, mouth - as well as feet and hands.

When we finally started shooting we had an unusually early - 4 am - call for make-up. Once we were all in make-up we could not eat. Our real mouth was two inches away from our 'ape' mouth - so all we could do was drink via a straw. It was a good way to diet !

It has been said that, on occasion, 'Wanda' both looked and sounded somewhat like Kim Hunter's 'Zira'. Was this a conscious "tribute" - or merely a happy coincidence?

Well, if I sounded like Kim Hunter it was just a coincidence... and I'll accept it as a compliment!

Wanda gets progressively scarier as the episode goes on, bending her will to Burke's - perhaps losing objectivity as the experiment goes on (witness her nearly uncontrolled screeching at Urko when he comes to the cave). What did you do in order to get yourself in that mindset? Where did you get your inspiration? Was there any parallel to any event or circumstance going through your head?



I felt Wanda was a very aggressive ape. She was well educated and regarded humans as inferior. She did not feel humans took her seriously and that upset her to the point she thought, "Just who did they think they are?"

Were the scripts available to read and revise before shooting began?

We received the script about ten days in advance of the shooting, and I can't recall our making any significant changes in the dialogue. But three or four days later, when we were called in to go over the fundamentals of being an ape - how to walk, how to talk etc - I think that is when I suggested to the director that because Wanda was a doctor, she could be wearing glasses. He liked the idea. So Wanda wore glasses.

What are your thoughts on the scene where Wanda tries to make Burke believe she's a human female? She sends the guards out and primps her hair, before turning her wiles on the hapless astronaut. Would Wanda have actually kissed a human if it got her what she needed to make her experiment a success?

Wanda found Burke rather attractive (for a human). She loved flirting with him. She thought herself very attractive - "Didn't he see that?" Of course, he did not, and she didn't understand that at all.

If it came to pass that she would have to kiss him, she would. She was determined to have her experiment go as she had planned.

Did the ring that Wanda wore have any significance - that you know of?

Sorry, I don't remember the ring.

Where were 'The Interrogation' scenes filmed?

The scenes were filmed on the set at the 20th Century Fox lot in Los Angeles.

Can you tell us anything about what it was like to work with Roddy McDowall?



I didn't work with Roddy on "Apes", but I had the great pleasure of working with him on the movie "Sixth and Main" in 1977. He played a man with no legs. As an actor he was excellent. As a person he was funny, attentive and one of the nicest I have ever met.

You also shared screen time with Booth Colman, Mark Lenard and James Naughton. Did you enjoy working with them? Did you know any of them beforehand?

No, I did not know nor had I worked with Booth, Mark or James (prior). However, they were fun to work with !

Are you recognised by Apes fans?

Under all that makeup - nobody knows who anybody is !

I loved playing Wanda, the doctor. I was the only ape wearing glasses. The glasses were my idea. I was playing a psychiatrist and I suggested to the director that glasses would add a very studious look to my character. He agreed. They did!

One day my three-year-old son came to the set. He was fascinated by all the "apes" and he talked to many, including me. Although he recognised my voice as being like his mother's, he would not accept the fact that his mother was inside an ape. To him, no matter what I said, I was what he saw: an "ape".

Can you recall any off-camera practical jokes going on during the recording of "The Interrogation"?

On the last day of shooting I kept my Doctor Wanda "ape" makeup on and drove home - a 30-minute drive from 20th Century Fox, through Beverly Hills.

At every stop light I waved at the drivers of the cars in the adjacent lanes.

I have never seen such strange looks! I got double-takes of total amazement, like, 'What is that? Is that an ape driving that car?'

Nobody could see underneath my Doctor Wanda's ape face - but, I was laughing as hard as I ever have!

Do you have any 'behind-the-scenes' stories from that particular episode?

It was great fun, but it was also tough. At lunchtime it was extremely difficult. We couldn't eat, only sip through a straw some malted milk or cold soup.

Sadly, the TV series was 'cut-short' after only 14 episodes. If the series had continued, were there any plans for Wanda to appear in future episodes?

If the series had continued, I would have prayed long and hard that Wanda would be a regular character. Unfortunately, in those days, there were only three networks and to be a success a series had to attract at least 30% of the available audience. "Apes" attracted millions in 1974, but not the 30% to merit rescheduling. But I had a ball on "Apes", and if the series had continued, I think I would have worked it for scale.

What is Beverly Garland doing nowadays ?

I am in the 55th year of my career in showbusiness. I am still a recurring regular on the popular "7th Heaven" on the WB channel, and I regularly do voice-overs and occasionally appears in guest-starring roles in TV series. In addition, I have the pleasure of being a lecturer about Hollywood and film-making on Crystal & Celebrity cruise lines.

I devote considerable time & energy to my 255-room Beverly Garland Hotel and Conference Centre in North

Hollywood, California, which, was recently praised by the prestigious Wall Street Journal as one of five best hotels in the entire USA for executives travelling with their families.

Travelling provides me with great relaxation. In December, I fulfilled a life-long goal of visiting all seven continents when I toured Antarctica, a truly amazing place. Included in my upcoming travels are tours to Egypt, Japan and maybe, if I am lucky, New Zealand.

Do you have any thoughts on why 'Apes' has proved to be so enduring? Is there a central message or theme that you think sums it up?

The viewing public was immediately fascinated by the juxtaposition of apes and humans. The plot was totally new. Apes in control of the world and humans facing a type of foe they had never encountered... even in the movies!

The production values were so high and realistic they made the fantasy-type plot very plausible. In less talented hands, the Apes could have been a feature film fiasco.

In today's multi-channel-homes television world, "Apes" would be another "Star Trek", have a permanent home on cable, and be supported by millions of viewers who desired its classic and creative escapism.

Ms Garland, thank you very much indeed!

"Thank You" - this was fun to do - great memories!



Beverly Garland and interrogator, Dean Preston, kiss and make up after a gruelling session of Q&A! Not really... the young boy in the picture is actually Beverly's son, James, then age three, visiting his mother on set.