

Sports & Entertainment

# ‘Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes’ epic franchise opens in theaters May 10; Director Wes Ball of ‘Maze Runner’ fame takes ‘apes’ in new vision

An all-new action-adventure spectacle, 20th Century Studios’ “Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes” is directed by Wes Ball and stars Owen Teague, Freya Allan, Kevin Durand, Peter Macon, and William H. Macy. The film is written by Josh Friedman, based on characters created by Rick Jaffa & Amanda Silver, and the producers are Wes Ball, Joe Hartwick, Jr., p.g.a., Rick Jaffa, p.g.a., Amanda Silver, p.g.a., Jason Reed, p.g.a., with Peter Chernin and Jenno Topping serving as executive producers. “Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes” is exclusively in theaters on May 10.

Wes Ball breathes new life into the global epic franchise set several generations in the future following Caesar’s reign, in which apes are the dominant species living harmoniously, and humans have been reduced to living in the shadows. As a new tyrannical ape leader builds his empire, one young ape undertakes a harrowing journey that will cause him to question all he has known about the past and make choices that will define a future for apes and humans alike.

REIGNITING THE GLOBAL ICONIC FRANCHISE –

20th Century Studios set out to revive the immensely popular “Planet of the Apes” franchise in 2011 with “Rise of the Planet of the Apes,” directed by Rupert Wyatt, which grossed over \$480 million worldwide at the box office. “Dawn of the Planet of the Apes,” directed by Matt Reeves, was released three years later, in 2014, grossing over \$710 million worldwide. “War for the Planet of the Apes,” also directed by Reeves, followed in 2017 and grossed over \$490 million worldwide.

All three films utilized state-of-the-art performance capture technology to bring the apes to life, and each one was nominated for an Oscar for best achievement in visual effects.

Following the success of the “Planet of the Apes” trilogy—which began with a man-made simian virus spreading across the globe and goes on to show the demise of humankind and the rise of the ape species, all through the eyes of Caesar—20th Century Studios was eager to continue with the popular franchise. But first and foremost, any new stories must be fresh, feature all-new characters, and create a new era for the “Planet of the Apes.”

As a child, filmmaker Wes Ball was given a VHS copy of 1968’s “Planet of the Apes” starring Charlton Heston, which he watched over and over for years. “It felt like a historical epic,” he says. “This time-traveling astronaut

fell into a world that felt somewhat medieval, populated by these apes, and it was one of my first introductions to sci-fi. The reveal at the end was a mind-blowing idea that triggered my fascination with the end of the world.”

The visionary filmmaker made his mark in Hollywood in 2014 with the hit film “The Maze Runner,” which grossed more than \$348 million worldwide. “Maze Runner: The Scorch Trials” and “Maze Runner: The Death Cure,” both of which Ball directed, followed in 2015 and 2018, respectively. The “Maze Runner” trilogy has grossed close to \$1 billion at the box office. It was 2019 when Ball was first asked about the possibility of reviving the iconic franchise, but he wasn’t interested initially. “The truth is, I initially said ‘no way,’” admits Ball. “How do you follow up those last three movies? I wasn’t interested in following the adventures of Caesar’s son, although there’s a great story to be told there. At the same time, I didn’t want to abandon what Matt Reeves and Rupert Wyatt had created in the Caesar trilogy. What they had done was phenomenal filmmaking.”

“Story-wise, these films resonate with people because they have sci-fi concepts, and they tackle issues of humanity,” Ball continues. “They deal with issues like class and race, about what it means to be human, and allow us to look at, analyze, and pinpoint deep issues about ourselves. They hold a mirror up to society and compel us to look at problems we as humans face through the lens of this fantastical world.”

A week later, however, an idea took shape in Ball’s mind. It was a concept that immediately energized him, taking place hundreds of years after the death of Caesar at the end of “War for the Planet of the Apes,” and was a story with a different tone... more of an adventure. “It was the story of a young, naive ape who doesn’t know anything about the outside world, which is a world in which Caesar has become a legend,” explains Ball. “If the last three movies were the apes in their stone age, now they’re entering their bronze age. We’re starting to see cultures develop within different clans. We see what has happened to the world that was left behind, what’s eroded in the absence of humanity.”

A visually awe-inspiring opening sequence, in which Noa—the young ape at the center of the story—scales a mountainous, overgrown structure to secure an eagle’s egg, was the second element of Ball’s concept. “The third element was an adversarial figure for Noa,” he continues, “a character who became Proximus Caesar in the script. This antago-

<https://youtu.be/XtFI7SNtVpY>  
Click link above to see Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes Trailer.

nist knows about the world that came before and wants to salvage artifacts from it to build a kingdom in which advanced apes have primacy.”

After approaching executives at 20th Century Studios with the idea, Ball met with Rick Jaffa and Amanda Silver, who had conceived the Caesar trilogy and written the screenplay for “Avatar: The Way of Water,” and who would go on to become producers on the new film. “It was a big round table,” recalls Ball. “I had some key artwork created, and I pitched my heart out. I could see this little sparkle in Rick and Amanda’s eyes. At the end of the pitch, they said, ‘Let’s get started!’”

The film introduces new characters and storylines, but for fans of the franchise, there are references to Caesar, whom Ball calls “one of the great protagonists in film history.” “Caesar is in this new movie, spiritually, throughout every-

thing,” Ball explains. “His ideas of morality and decency and his relationship with humans—all that is explored through an almost mythical lens that I think is exciting.”

“We met with Wes and Joe and were taken with Wes’ ideas, artwork, and enthusiasm,” recalls Silver. “It was a meeting of hearts and minds.”

Jaffa agrees, saying, “We shared a mutual love of the ‘Planet of the Apes’ franchise and a mutual vision for where it could go. Four years later, it’s still an extremely productive collaboration.”

Joe Hartwick Jr., a producer on all three “Maze Runner” films, worked with Ball from the outset. “After the pitch, Rick and Amanda hooked us up with Josh Friedman (‘War of the Worlds’), who had worked with them on the story for ‘Avatar: The Way of Water’ and came on board to write the screenplay,” says Hartwick. “We spent five months working with Josh on ideas for

how Wes’ concept could develop, and Rick and Amanda were instrumental in that process.”

According to Jaffa, “We thought of Josh immediately, knowing he would be an essential piece of the puzzle. He’s a brilliant writer and a thoughtful collaborator.”

Friedman crucially helped develop the Nova (Freya Allan’s character) storyline—the human presence. “I remember Josh said, ‘You want to do a Kurosawa film with apes,’” recalls Ball. “That’s what it is in a way. This epic adventure of a character who meets multiple points of view as he learns about the world around him, the history of apes, and the history of humans and their relationship with each other.”

Whereas “War for the Planet of the Apes” was a Moses story with Caesar, a leader with the weight of the world on his shoulders, suffering for his people and delivering them ultimately to a promised land, this film is about discovery. It is a coming-of-age story and an adventure set in an evolved universe where we can see the decay and how nature has reclaimed the earth. “I thought it would be really fun to see our world happen when humans are gone essentially,” Ball explains, “and the setting in the remains of our

*“War for the Planet of the Apes,” in a time when the written word no longer exists. Ball explains, “We never really put a date on it to be honest, which was a brilliant move on our writers’ part. It is many, many generations later, but it can be whatever you want because...”*

world. I loved the idea that buildings and what’s left of buildings, anyway, are crumbling away, and glass doesn’t exist anymore cause it’s all broken out through erosion and time. I loved the idea of the world transforming back into this landscape that is actually buildings that are now overgrown with trees.”

As for when the new story would take place, the filmmakers agreed that it should be set hundreds of years after the events of “War for the Planet of the Apes,” in a time when the written word no longer exists. Ball explains, “We never really put a date on it to be honest, which was a brilliant move on our writers’ part. It is many, many generations later, but it can be whatever you want because it is people’s determination of how long they think it really is based on the visuals.”

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## NFL, NFLPA, and 2K announce launch of 2K Playmakers

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Playmakers is now available for download free of charge on Apple and Android devices. App includes optional in-game purchases.

For more information on NFL 2K Playmakers and 2K, visit the game’s website or the Android or Apple store pages. More details can also be found in the launch trailer.

\*NFL 2K Playmakers requires an Apple device compatible with iOS 13.0.0 and iPadOS 13.0.0 or

higher or an Android device with 4+ GB of RAM or 8+ (Android 9.0 recommended).

\*\*Special launch bundle offer expires May 7, 2024 at 11:59pm PT. Limit one (1) per user. In-game items will be delivered via the user’s in-game mailbox on May 8, 2024.

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