



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on August 6, 2011

## Rise of the Planet of the Apes: Best of the Franchise

In *Rise of the Planet of the Apes*, scientist Will Rodman (James Franco) is greatly affected by his father's debilitation, as he is plagued by Alzheimer's disease. Rodman becomes consumed by the notion of finding a cure for the disease before it's too late, and is willing to do whatever it takes to do so.

Rodman experiments on Chimpanzee Number 9, also known as Bright Eyes, to find the cure, and after five years of perfecting his drug, the female chimp is showing marked improvement in her cognitive development as a result of the experimental drug, ALZ112. Excited by the results, Rodman begins to push for the drug to be used in human trials, a request that his supervisor, Steven Jacobs (David Oyelowo), sees as a means to acquire great wealth.



The men prepare for a meeting with the medical board and corporate reps, who may be interested in investing in the drug, but the meeting goes haywire when Chimp Number 9 becomes enraged and attacks her handlers and destroys property. She is killed in the process, and Jacobs insists that the entire project, as well as the experimental subjects, be destroyed.

Later, however, Rodman learns that Chimp Number 9 had given birth to a male chimp the night before, without anyone having known. He realizes her behavior was not a reaction to the drug, but the mother's way of protecting her son. Rodman throws aside his sense of medical ethics and administers the drug to his father, whose condition quickly improves. Rodman is so excited by what he observes that he seems to have lost his sense of ethics. He decides to continue the work on his medical experiment entirely on his own, and take Bright Eyes' son home and hide him in the attic.

Meanwhile, the baby male chimp, which Rodman named Caesar, appears to be developing at a fast rate. By the time he is 24 months old, he is signing over 20 words and solving puzzles that are too difficult for a second grader.

Unfortunately, the progress Will's father has made from the drug begins to wear off, and his father loses some of his faculties, leading to a confrontation with a nasty neighbor. When the neighbor grows increasingly angry with Charles, Caesar jumps to Charles' defense, which forces local authorities to take him from Will's home and place him in an ape sanctuary, where Caesar is mistreated.

At the same time, Will confesses to his boss that he had used the drug on his father, and that the drug was an initial success. Hearing this, his boss encourages him to develop an even more powerful strain of the drug.

Will becomes overzealous and overambitious, but his intentions are good, as he wants to develop



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something that will have a massive impact on mankind. And those who are familiar with the *Planet of the Apes* films know that Rodman does in fact get his way, but the impact is likely not what he intended or expected.

*Rise of the Planet of the Apes* has a number of positive elements, such as the intense love between a father and a son. It is Will's love for his father, Charles (John Lithgow), that drives him to find a cure for Alzheimer's disease in the first place. Unfortunately, that desire leads Will to make some poor and unethical choices.

Likewise, though Will elects to hide Ceasar in his attic, Will and his father come to love Ceasar and treat him as a member of the family, and Ceasar returns that love.

The film also calls into question the notion of playing God, and seems to take a stance against genetic engineering.

This film does not entail as much violence as one would expect, though there is a definite violent presence in the film. The first bouts of violence focus on hand-to-hand combat, some of it a bit gruesome. For example, when Ceasar defends Charles against a neighbor, he knocks the neighbor off the porch and bites a finger off the neighbor's hand.

Later, when Ceasar is in the primate shelter, he is mistreated by an attendant there. Ceasar later gets revenge on that attendant by doing many of the same things to him that were done to Ceasar, but in the process, Ceasar accidentally electrocutes the attendant.

When the apes develop an army, the apes wreak havoc on the city, destroying property and administering beatings to their human counterparts. However, Ceasar does not seek the death of humans and orders his army to spare human lives. There is a clear emphasis on compassion and mercy within the film. The humans, however, are not quite so humanitarian, and utilize any weapons they can against the simian army to defeat them.

In fact, owing to the elevation of the apes, the film blurs the distinction between man (who possesses an eternal soul) and all other creatures (over whom man has dominion). Obviously, the more seriously the sci-fi thriller is taken, the more troubling this will be. Viewers may be troubled, in particular, by the notion that apes can acquire human-like souls through biological and genetic engineering — or any other process for that matter.

The film makes excellent use of state-of-the-art technology that makes the apes in the film look entirely real. The visual effects utilize motion capture and performance capture to create a realistic impression, and apparently *Rise of the Planet of the Apes* is the first film to use performance capture technology in direct sunlight rather than just on a sound stage.

The technology also manages to capture a wide range of emotions on Ceasar's face, revealing the emotional turmoil churning beneath the surface.

In addition to the impressive technology, the film is driven by excellent performances and brilliant writing.

*Rise of the Planet of the Apes* also seems to celebrate the struggle for freedom.

Overall, however, *Rise of the Planet of the Apes* is an entertaining film with a number of positive elements. While it is not intended for extremely young audiences because of some of the more intense and perhaps frightening moments, it is certainly capable of appealing to most other moviegoers. It will likely be the blockbuster of the summer, and has enough quality to earn some Academy Award



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nominations.



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