

The Issues with Great Apes Working in Entertainment

Non-human primates, like orangutans and chimpanzees, are intelligent, sensitive, highly social animals that can live 50-60 years in captivity. They are fascinating animals and their infants are cute and endearing. This makes them popular in commercial entertainment, as performers in commercials, movies, live stage shows, circuses and print ads. They are also used to promote mall openings and late night talk shows. But this popularity and attractiveness mask the *cruel and dangerous practices* frequently used to make the animals compliant with their handlers.

Infants are taken from their mothers shortly after birth to be raised by humans and they are taught unnatural behaviors and tricks. They lose the opportunity to learn social skills important for development of normal adult behavior. The mothers are traumatized from losing their infants and become depressed.

As orangutans and chimpanzees grow up, they become strong, dangerous and unpredictable to handle. To maintain control, handlers may beat or electrically shock them, remove their teeth, give them tranquilizers and deprive them of food. More often, as these animals reach adolescence, they become too difficult to handle and they are sold to breeder compounds where the process starts all over again, or they are left in deplorable conditions, like tiny cages in someone's backyard or in roadside attractions.

Today more ex-entertainment pets are finding their way into legitimate sanctuaries where they can live with their own species in enriched environments with good nutrition and without exploitation. However, the nine or ten great ape sanctuaries in North America are all at capacity, many with waiting lists, where care can cost \$15,000 per year per animal.

Dressing orangutans and chimpanzees in human clothing and training them to do tricks, is degrading and inaccurately portrays their biology and conservation status. Since conservation efforts rely on informed public opinion, these practices may undermine conservation efforts. Audiences are misled into thinking that these species are thriving, when in fact orangutans may be extinct in the wild in as little as 10 years. **Audiences are also misled into believing that these animals make good pets.** In the last 4 years, there have been more than 40 documented instances where a pet primate has escaped or injured humans. The most recent incident was by a 15 year old, 200 pound pet chimpanzee, that once starred in television commercials, who attacked and severely injured a woman in Connecticut.

Honda, Subaru and Yahoo! have pledged to no longer use apes in their advertisements.

Apes need your help! What you can do:

- **Don't buy products where orangutans and chimpanzees are used in their advertising.**
- **Write to the companies using these animals and urge them to stop using apes in their ads.**
- **Don't go see movies exploiting apes. Write to actors, movie producers, and TV studios urging them to stop supporting animal actors like great apes. With today's technology, animals can easily be replicated on screen without using an actual animal.**
- **Take a handout with you today and tell your friends and family about what you have learned by taking a moment to read this poster and handout.**
- **Support the Captive Primate Safety Act which seeks to protect public safety and promote animal welfare by prohibiting interstate commerce of primates for the pet trade.**

For more information on apes in entertainment and what you can do to help these animals and others visit www.centerforgreatapes.org

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