



September 18, 2022

Steven Spielberg
c/o Richard Lovett
via email: rlovett@caa.com

To Mr. Spielberg,

We were disappointed to see a performing capuchin monkey in the trailer for “The Fabelmans,” and respectfully ask that you replace such scenes with computer generated imagery before the film’s theatrical release. **The footage is harmful because it directly promotes the unethical treatment of primates.**

The use of primates in entertainment causes [lasting trauma](#) to the individuals involved. **The entire lifetime of a monkey or ape is negatively affected when they are used in entertainment.** As infants, they are deprived of maternal contact at a very early age, when they are heavily dependent upon their mothers. Training and living conditions for animal “actors” can be incredibly stressful and even abusive. A life spent performing denies them virtually all of the experiences they need to be healthy, including social housing, social grooming, and exercise. When they are denied these natural behaviors, primates develop aberrant and harmful behaviors, such as obsessive compulsions, self-mutilation, and aggression. The simple fact that this monkey in your film is not living in a social group with other monkeys and was forced perform on cue in a disorienting and unnatural environment is reason enough to raise animal welfare concerns.

Misleading representations of primates in the media have lasting negative repercussions. This promotes future use of primates in entertainment and the exotic pet trade and has a negative impact on conservation. The public now turns away from this type of footage due to heightened awareness of the sadness and cruelty behind the camera. [Hollywood is no longer filming with chimps](#) because such imagery of endangered animals is archaic and inflammatory. There are many filmmakers who also won’t film with other primates, including monkeys. In contrast, films like Jordan Peele’s Nope serve as a great example of how impactful (and still ethical) CGI scenes of primates can be.

The North American Primate Sanctuary Alliance (NAPSA) is a coalition of nine of the leading primate sanctuaries on the continent. In our member sanctuaries, we care for over 800 nonhuman primates, many of whom were formerly used in entertainment.

In “The Fabelmans”, Sammy’s mother says she got a monkey because she “needed a laugh.” We find this anything but funny. Using a monkey “actor” is irresponsible and a distraction from the story you so artfully tell.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Erika Fleury'.

Erika Fleury
Program Director



Advocacy Position Statement Performing Primates

The North American Primate Sanctuary Alliance (NAPSA) is opposed to the use of trained primates for entertainment. As experts in the field of primate care, we respectfully ask the public not to support public events featuring trained monkeys and apes.

While such performances may seem amusing on the surface, the primates used in these spectacles are poorly treated. Although the records of many animal rental operators are generally less than stellar, and training and housing conditions can be incredibly stressful (and often abusive), the simple fact that primates are forced to dress up and perform on cue in a terribly unnatural situation is reason enough to avoid such events.

The entire lifetime of a primate is negatively affected when they are exploited for entertainment. As infants, they are removed from their mothers at a very early age – years before they would naturally separate. They are trained using methods that intimidate and inhibit their innate behaviors. Even then, the intelligence and unpredictable nature of these wild animals means that they often can only be used for a short time as actors before they become too independent, unmanageable, and dangerous. Primates are then deemed useless to the entertainment industry, and sold into situations that range from uncomfortable to downright harmful. The lucky ones are able to spend the remaining years of their life in a primate sanctuary.

NAPSA is a coalition of nine of the leading primate sanctuaries on the continent. In our member sanctuaries, we care for over 800 primates, many of whom were formerly used in entertainment. We see how primates are forever damaged by the work forced upon them, and we look forward to the day when such archaic practices are no longer permitted.

For more information:

[“The Use of Primate “Actors” in Feature Films 1990–2013,” Brooke Catherine Aldrich](#)

[“Apes in Media and Commercial Performances,” Association of Zoos & Aquariums](#)

[“Bengals Shocking Half-Time ‘Cowboy Monkey’ Has a Cruel History,” The Dodo](#)

[“Chimpanzees in Media,” ChimpCARE](#)

[“Apes in Entertainment,” Jane Goodall Institute Australia](#)

[“Opposition to the Use of Nonhuman Primates in the Media,” International Primatological Society](#)

[“Atypical Experiences of Captive Chimpanzees \(Pan Troglodytes\) Are Associated with Higher Hair Cortisol Concentrations as Adults,” S.L. Jacobson et al.](#)

[“Impact of Visual Context on Public Perceptions of Non-Human Primate Performers,” K. A. Leighty et al.](#)