Trivia for Apocalypse Now (1979)

- Director Francis Coppola proposed this film ten years before he was given funds to do it. The studio didn’t think he could handle such a large production, so he went and made Godfather, The (1972) and Godfather: Part II, The (1974), becoming extremely famous, rich, and respected.

- Originally scheduled to be shot over six weeks, ended up taking 16 months.

- Martin Sheen’s scenes in his hotel room were intentionally performed drunk, and were entirely ad-libbed. Sheen did not mean to smash the mirror with his hand; this was a result of his drunken stupor.

- Harvey Keitel originally cast as Captain Willard. Two weeks into shooting, Coppola replaced him with Sheen, saying Keitel’s Willard was too assertive.

- A typhoon destroyed sets, causing a delay of several months.

- Filmed in the Philippines, where Ferdinand Marcos agreed to supply the helicopters and pilots. Marcos’s government also needed them for fighting the rebels, and sometimes withdrew them during filming, sending different pilots not familiar with the filming.

- A second sequence featuring the Playmates was filmed but cut. The patrol boat crew encounter the Playmates’ helicopter which had run out of fuel. They swap some gasoline in exchange for a chance to sleep with the three girls. Lynda Carter was originally cast as one of the girls, but was replaced by Colleen Camp due to the unforeseen production delays.

- Marlon Brando paid $1 million in advance. Threatened to quit and keep the advance. Coppola told his agent that he didn’t care, and if they couldn’t get Brando, they would try Jack Nicholson, Robert Redford, and then Al Pacino. Brando eventually turned up late, drunk, 40kg overweight, and admitted he hadn’t read the script or even “Heart of Darkness”, the book it was based on. Read Coppola’s script, and refused to do it. Argued for days over single lines of dialog. They eventually agreed on an ad-lib style script, and this was shot according to Brando’s stipulations that he appear in shadows.

- Sheen had a heart attack during the filming; some shots of Willard’s back are actually of someone else.

- Sam Bottoms was on speed, LSD, and marijuana during the shooting of parts of the movie.

- Dennis Hopper was originally going to play Willard’s predecessor, but he was too affected by drugs to play a military type, so Coppola wrote him a part as a crazy photo-journalist. Hopper and Coppola argued over whether it was possible to forget your lines when you didn’t learn them in the first place.

- The photo journalist quotes two S. Eliot, T. poems. In a late scene in the film, a slow pan
over a table in Kurtz's room shows a copy of "From Ritual to Romance", a book by 'Jessie Weston' that inspired Eliot's poem "The Wasteland".

- Kurtz's Montagnards were played by Ifugao people. Coppola's wife Eleanor saw them performing animal sacrifice, and convinced her husband to use this in the film.

- Coppola invested several million dollars of his personal wealth after the film went severely over budget.

- Coppola threatened suicide several times during the making of the film.

- There are three different treatments of the ending and credits. In the 35mm version, the credits roll over surrealistic explosions and burning jungle as the air strike occurs. The 70mm version has none of this, no credits, nothing but a one-line copyright notice at the end. Both versions are available on video. The 70mm version has been letterboxed. A third version has the credits rolling over a black background.

- There are no opening credits or titles. The title of the movie appears as graffiti late in the film.

- Entire set of scenes cut, where Willard and company find a river-side French colony. Made the "journey back through time" symbolism more apparent: Vietnam War to French Colony to Jungle Culture.

- Carmine Coppola (director's father) wrote the score for this film.

- Harrison Ford's character wears a name badge which reads "G. Lucas". George Lucas directed Ford in American Graffiti (1973) and Star Wars (1977), two films which made Ford famous. O.D. Spandlin's character is named "R. Corman", after producer Roger Corman.

- Directors Cameo (Francis Coppola): filming a war documentary.

- Coppola's wife Eleanor filmed and recorded the making of this film, and has been released as a feature film called Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker's Apocalypse (1991). It includes clips from the movie, as well as later interviews.