

# Spielberg to revive Kubrick's abandoned 'Napoleon' project for TV



Steven Spielberg this week said he's developing a new TV miniseries based on Stanley Kubrick's screenplay for *Napoleon* — the late director's ambitious, and perhaps most tantalizing unrealized project. Spielberg revealed his plans to revive the script during an interview with France's Canal+ ([http://www.canalplus.fr/c-infos-documentaires/pid2800-c-le-jt-de-canal.html?vid=827132&sc\\_cmpid=SharePlayerEmbed](http://www.canalplus.fr/c-infos-documentaires/pid2800-c-le-jt-de-canal.html?vid=827132&sc_cmpid=SharePlayerEmbed)), though details on its progress and planned release date remain unclear.

"I've been developing Stanley Kubrick's screenplay — for a miniseries not for a motion picture — about the life of Napoleon," Spielberg told the network in an interview aired Sunday, adding that he's been working on the project with the Kubrick family, with whom he previously collaborated on 2001's *A.I.* — another unrealized Kubrick film.

Kubrick began developing *Napoleon* in the 1960s, and hoped to release it as a feature-length film following *2001: A Space Odyssey*. The notoriously meticulous director spent years researching the French emperor, compiling an extensive archive of notes, hand-drawn sketches, and more than 15,000 location photos. He completed a draft screenplay in 1969 (available online [here \(http://cinephilearchive.tumblr.com/post/42859331539\)](http://cinephilearchive.tumblr.com/post/42859331539)), but both MGM and United Artists refused to greenlight it, over fears that such an ambitious historical drama would underperform at the box office.

**"THE GREATEST FILM NEVER MADE"**

Kubrick instead turned his attention to *Barry Lyndon*, a 1975 drama set 15 years before the Napoleonic wars, but was reportedly crushed by Hollywood's rejection of *Napoleon*. Decades later, the film continues to occupy an almost mythical status among Kubrick devotees, spawning myriad conjectures and "what if?" debates. In 2011, Taschen released an entire tome on *Napoleon*, describing it as "the greatest film never made

**"HE NEVER MADE THE SAME PICTURE TWICE."**

Spielberg's exact role in the forthcoming miniseries remains unclear, though his involvement comes as no surprise. It was Kubrick himself who chose Spielberg to direct *A.I.* in the early 1990s, after developing the script for more than two decades. Spielberg initially declined the offer, but decided to take it on following the

auteur's death in 1999.

Spielberg has made no secret of his admiration for Kubrick, describing him as a "chameleon" of cinematic genius. "He never made the same picture twice," the director said in a 1999 interview ([http://www.openculture.com/2012/04/steven\\_spielberg\\_on\\_the\\_genius\\_of\\_stanley\\_kubrick.html](http://www.openculture.com/2012/04/steven_spielberg_on_the_genius_of_stanley_kubrick.html)). "Every single picture is a different genre, a different story, a different risk. The only thing that bonded all of his films was the incredible virtuoso that he was with craft."