

SALUTING STANLEY

At a Stanley Kubrick exhibition in Berlin, **Derek Scally** learns what went on behind the cameras

Stanley Kubrick's career was built on monumental moral fables and stirring cinematic moments, but it began with a sleazy, hard-boiled slogan: "Her soft mouth was the road to sin-smearing violence." The catchline for *Killer's Kiss*, one of Kubrick's first commercial features, is like a premonition of the bad publicity that would dog the director's career for decades. But now, six years after his death, at the age of 70, the genius of Kubrick's vision is being celebrated in an extensive exhibition in Berlin and an extraordinary new book.

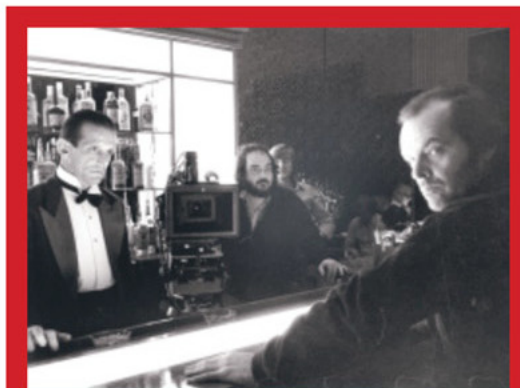
Stanley Kubrick: the Exhibition, which opens with the film-makers advice that "the best education in film is to make one", could be subtitled *Educating Stanley*. It shows that Kubrick never stopped learning, making each film a leap forward from the last.

The exhibition moves swiftly through the early *Killer's Kiss* and *The Killing* to the anti-war Kirk Douglas film *Paths of Glory*, from 1957. Banned by de Gaulle in France, the movie was accompanied by a scandal - and acres of press coverage. It was the beginning of a tradition for Kubrick's films.

Frustration at his lack of control over *Spartacus*, in 1960, drove him from the Hollywood system. His first independent film was the scandalous *Lolita*, starring James Mason as a man obsessed with a teenage girl - and co-starring a cast of thousands of spittle-flecked journalists obsessed with a man obsessed with a teenage girl. Judging from the number of newspaper articles in the exhibition, Kubrick had an overworked clippings assistant in his employ even at this early stage in his career.

The exhibition, like Kubrick's career, comes into its own with the scabrous anti-war satire *Doctor Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*. Visitors flicking through a facsimile of Kubrick's workbook can see example after example of his belief that great genius comes from great work. One page, testament to Kubrick's difficulty in finding a title, is filled with alternative names, such as *Spare the Bomb*, *How to Live with the Bomb*, *Oh Wonderful Bomb*, *Why I Love the Bomb* and *How to Start WWII*.

The press once again has a starring role in *A Clockwork Orange*, from 1972, a disturbing look at "rape, ultra-violence and Beethoven". A display case is filled with old British newspapers - the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Sun*, the *Daily Mirror* - proclaiming a "14-day wonder cure for killer Alex".



On closer inspection, the papers are film props that hail the breakthrough brainwashing treatment for curing the film's protagonist of his violent urges.

On an adjacent wall is the real press coverage, with headlines such as "Violent film influenced young murderer" and "Thugs sang tune from 'A Clockwork Orange'", which prompted Kubrick and Warner Bros to withdraw the film in Britain.

Full control of a movie for Kubrick didn't just mean control over the final cut; it meant knowing absolutely everything about his subject before he even started filming.

That is demonstrated in the exhibit for *Napoleon*, the epic that never was. The director's impressive, obsessive card index - thousands and thousands of colour-coded cards - provide a day-by-day record of Napoleon's life: what he did, where he went, whom he met, the weather on days of battle.

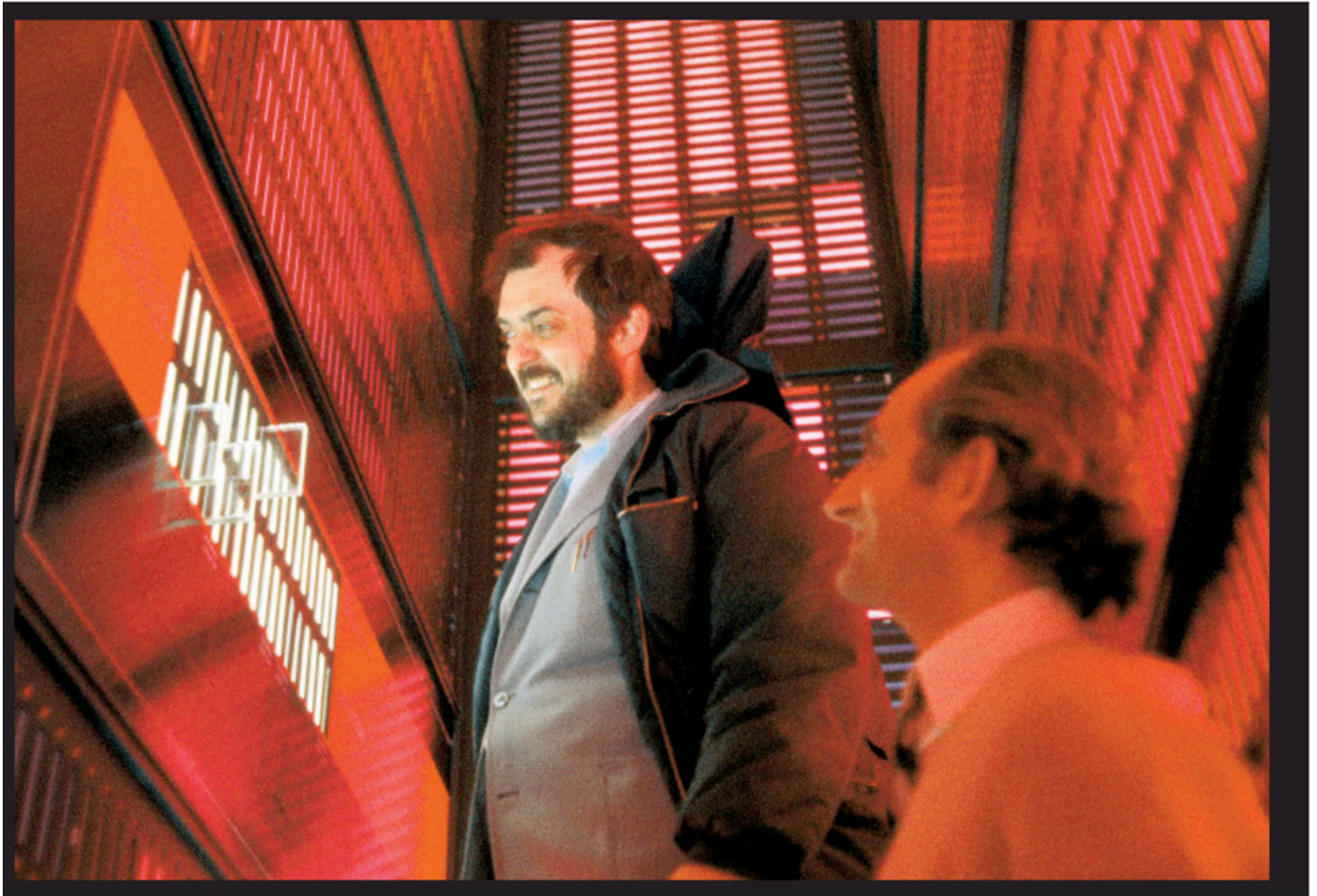
Kubrick's approach to his actors was best summed up by Jack Nicholson, star of *The Shining*, who remarked that the director "gives new meaning to the word meticulous".

The visual highlight of the exhibition is the exhibit for *2001: A Space Odyssey*, Kubrick's ageless, graceful masterwork. On display are examples of props such as cutlery, which, even four years after the film was set, still look futuristic.

Marvellous set models demonstrate another aspect of Kubrick's genius: his tireless interest in cinema technology. But unlike the new *Star Wars* films, in which special-effects possibilities appear to dictate the onscreen drama, Kubrick was not a slave to special effects. His technical handiwork was a vital means to an end of creating great art.

The last exhibit lets visitors pass by the red, doleful eye of HAL 9000 and enter the nerve centre of the spaceship *Discovery*. The walls are lined with familiar red metal grilles, the air is humid and all you can hear is Dr Dave Bowman's ragged gasps for air as he tries to dismantle the psychotic computer.

This scene, captured on a few frames of glorious 70mm celluloid, is stuck inside *The Stanley Kubrick Archives*, the first of many pleasant surprises in this stunning salute to the director. The book is an artistic as well as physical monument. As large as a folded newspaper and five centimetres thick, it's not so much a coffee-table book as a small coffee table in itself, minus the legs. Alison Castle, its editor, is not kidding when she calls the work the result of "two years of trav-



elling through time and space in the heart of Stanley Kubrick's universe".

She worked with Kubrick's third wife, Christiane, and his executive producer Jan Harlan to "excavate" the director's archives. By letting readers explore the archives intuitively, the book is as extraordinary as the Berlin exhibition is conventional. It solves admirably the problem faced by all film books - why not just watch the film? - by taking a *catalogue raisonné* approach. The first half of the book reproduces hundreds of gorgeous film stills, drawing attention to Kubrick's less popular films, such as *Barry Lyndon*, which stars Ryan O'Neal as an Irish revolutionary. The stills showcase Kubrick's most beautiful film, with its dreamy watercolour exteriors and intimate candlelit interiors, shot using custom-made lenses.

Kubrick's approach to his work, he told a journalist in 1980, was: "In all things mysterious, never explain." That got him a reputation, some would say undeserved, of being a recluse. The second half of the book, with a synopsis and development history of each film, goes some way to explaining Kubrick's working methods.

Thankfully, the book doesn't strip his films of all their mystery: it's more like a classy striptease, showing you just enough to whet your appetite.

The book, while not overly critical of Kubrick the man, analyses Kubrick the director as a moralist in the tradition of Michelangelo Antonioni and Luchino Visconti, and as a visionary whose film

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themes become more relevant with the passing years of the 21st century he never lived to experience. Breathtaking sketches from *AI*, later filmed by Steven Spielberg, show an aircraft crashing into a New York skyscraper, with chilling overtones of the September 11th attacks.

The generous proportions of *The Stanley Kubrick Archives* come at a high price - €150 - but the book is a worthy testament to Kubrick's own largesse, a director who thought on the same scale as DW Griffith and Sergei Eisenstein.

John Calley, production chief at Warner Bros from 1968 to 1981, once said: "It would make no sense to tell Kubrick: 'Okay fella, you've got one more week to finish the thing.' What you would get then is a mediocre film that cost, say, \$8 million instead of a masterpiece that cost \$11 million. When somebody is spending a lot of your money, you are wise to give him time to do the job right."

Comments like that demonstrate the real value of *The Stanley Kubrick Archives*, a document of the authority and respect Kubrick's genius attracted, from both the film industry and audiences, and of the era of film-making that died with him. ♦

Stanley Kubrick: the Exhibition is at Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin, until April 18th; see www.stanleykubrick.de. *The Stanley Kubrick Archives*, edited by Alison Castle, is published by Taschen, €150; see www.taschen.com. Aer Lingus flies to Berlin from Mondays to Thursdays; see www.aerlingus.com

● Above: Stanley Kubrick with his production designer on the set of *2001: A Space Odyssey*
● Left, from top: with Jack Nicholson for *The Shining*; Kubrick's index cards detailing the daily movements of Napoleon; and with Peter Sellers for *Dr Strangelove*. Photographs: Stanley Kubrick Estate, Warner Bros, German Film Museum