

Kubrick missing in the rushes

Despite access to private papers, the genius behind the camera remains a mystery, says *Andrew Biswell*

Stanley Kubrick
Archives
Elisavinda Castle, ed.
Taschen, £100

STANLEY Kubrick died in 1999 at the age of 70, and six years after the posthumous release of his last film, *Eyes Wide Shut*, his reputation is as strong as ever. *2001: A Space Odyssey* and *A Clockwork Orange* have established themselves as classics, and scarcely a day goes by without the emergence of another book on the un-born director.

Although he was internationally revered and highly paid in his lifetime, the reclusive director always avoided being interviewed on television and since his death, only a handful of researchers have been allowed into the Kubrick family home in Hertfordshire to consult the director's papers and photographic collection.

The first published survey of Kubrick's hitherto unknown material is *Stanley Kubrick Archives*, a large folio-sized illustrated book which weighs in at a hefty 1,200 pages, and has a price tag to match. This volume has much in common with Kubrick's later work, which is a wide-screen presentation of surprisingly long, beautifully lit, neurotically worried details, and slightly more than it needs to be. But new discoveries wait behind its covers for the benefit of those who want a detailed look at how the films were shot and edited.

The book is divided into three sections. The first part is composed entirely of images from Kubrick's films - which include *Lolita*, *Dr Strangelove*, *The Shining* and *Pulp Fiction*. The purpose of

including so many stills in the book is unclear. We are told that the idea is to let the films speak for themselves as visual poetry, but this is a doubtful enterprise when the films themselves are easily available. Although there is something to be said for admiring Kubrick's composition of an individual shot, the same effect could be achieved by using the pause button on a DVD player. Most readers will probably skip the coffee-table first section, which is entirely without captions or commentary, and move on to the more substantial second part.

The unpublished papers are deployed to good effect here, with each film being given a long and informative chapter. Kubrick's production notes and annotated drafts of scripts are reproduced in facsimile, and it is fascinating to trace the evolution of his projects, including some which did not go into production. These narrative accounts are supported by a wealth of photographic material, and by the texts of letters and interviews with the director.

This book opens up the creative process for full inspection in ways which have not previously been possible for scholars and general readers. An audio CD comes as part of the package, containing an extended and revealing interview with Kubrick conducted in 1966 by Jeremy Bernstein, who visited him

on the set of *2001*. Kubrick speaks about his boyhood in New York, where he scraped a modest living in his late teens and early 20s as a semi-professional chess player. He made three dollars a day, "which goes a long way if all you are buying is food". Having found a job as a photographer for *Look* magazine, he produced documentary photographs, one of which - about the boxer Walter Cartier - formed the basis of his first short film, *The Day of the Fight*.

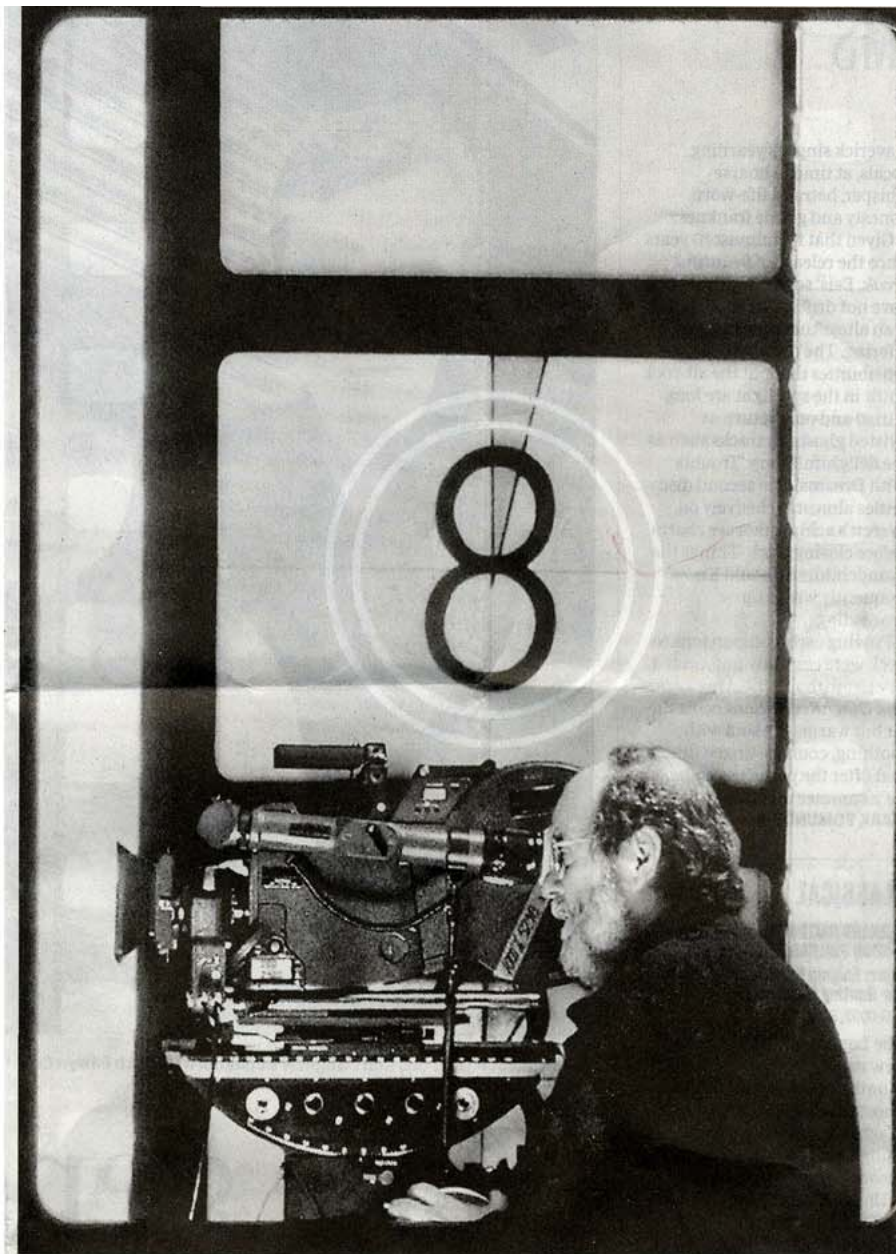
Kubrick soon graduated from shorts to directing feature-length films for MGM. His collaboration with Kirk Douglas on the First World War drama *Paths of Glory* led to an offer from Douglas to direct *Spartacus*. Yet Douglas insisted on making the final cut, and Kubrick maintained that this did little to improve the end product.

The Cold War nuclear stand-off did much to sharpen Kubrick's awareness of global politics. "When you start reading the analyses of nuclear strategy," he told Bernstein, "they seem so thoughtful that you're lulled into a temporary sense of reassurance. But as you go deeper into it, and become more involved, you begin to realise that every one of these lines of thought leads to a paradox."

In *Dr Strangelove*, subtitled "How I Stopped Worrying and Learned to Love the Bomb", he dramatised the absurdities of the 1960s. The Texan satirical novelist Terry Southern contributed to its lacerating script ("Gentlemen, you can't fight in here. This is the War



'Kirk Douglas insisted on making the final cut, and Kubrick maintained that this did little to improve the end product'



In the frame: despite the size of the Archives, we can expect much more material on Kubrick to emerge. Photograph: Richard Kenidal

Room"); and Peter Sellers, who had worked with Kubrick on *Lolita*, played several characters. The film's final scene, a post-apocalyptic custard-pie battle in the presidential bunker, was deleted before it went on general release.

Kubrick returned to slapstick comedy in *A Clockwork Orange*, his loose adaptation of Anthony Burgess's ultra-violent novella. The decision to omit the final chapter of the novel, in which the thuggish teenage hero renounces violence and decides to settle down with a wife, caused a rancorous falling-out with Burgess, who soon became tired of being asked to defend Kubrick's travesty of his original book. Burgess retaliated with a bad-tempered but hilarious novel, *The Clockwork Testament*, in which Kubrick appears, thinly disguised, as a Hollywood moron whose eyes light up with dollar signs.

The biggest revelations in this archival scrapbook concern Kubrick's elaborate plans for abandoned films such as *AI: Artificial Intelligence* (eventually filmed by Steven Spielberg) and *Aryan Papers*, based on the novel by Louis Begley. Critic Gene D Phillips contributes a fascinating essay on Kubrick's *Napoleon*, which exists in the form of various draft scripts. Kubrick was ready to begin filming in 1969, but the box-office failure of *Waterloo* – starring Rod Steiger as Bonaparte – struck fear into the hearts of studio executives, who were nervous about the prospect of another Napoleonic disaster. Disappointingly, Kubrick's *Napoleon* script is not included in this book, but it is likely to appear in a separate publication later.

THERE ARE FEW traces in this otherwise illuminating volume of Kubrick the private man. In particular, it is a pity that his wife and daughters, who were active collaborators in his films, have not con-

tributed interviews or essays, especially since they have spoken about him before. His wife Christiane appeared in *Paths of Glory* as a German singer, and provided the striking paintings which adorn the walls in *A Clockwork Orange* and *Eyes Wide Shut*. Their youngest daughter Vivian acted in *2001*, directed a documentary about the making of *The Shining*, and composed the incidental music for *Full Metal Jacket*. Given that film-making was a family business for the Kubricks, it is surprising these key collaborators have not been written into the story more fully.

The Stanley Kubrick Archives is a box of delights, but the amount of material excluded from this volume suggests there will be more to follow.

Although the book is handsomely produced, the asking price of £100 is steep. Impecunious readers might prefer to start with Vincent LoBrutto's well-informed biography, or Michel Ciment's illustrated book, *Kubrick: The Definitive Edition*.