



The Stanley Kubrick Archives
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Taschen (www.taschen.com)

APART FROM OCCUPYING an undisputed place in the pantheon of great filmmakers, Stanley Kubrick is also one of cinema's most effective image-makers. Images from Kubrick's films are among the most resonant of modern cinema: Slim Pickens riding the bomb in *Dr. Strangelove*, the forced-open eyes of Malcolm McDowell as he submits to the Ludovico technique in *A Clockwork Orange*, the insane visage of Jack Nicholson glaring through the splintered door in *The Shining*. The twelve major feature films that represent Kubrick's celluloid legacy are the result of an intensely concentrated vision, the focus and determination of a true film artist. It is only right that Taschen, one of the world's most enterprising art publishers, have seen fit to honour Kubrick with such a lavish volume.

The book is divided into two main sections: The first part includes still frames from his twelve acknowledged feature films (*Fear and Desire* is excluded, but covered in the section on early work). The stills are scanned directly from the film reels, and are printed uncropped in the original aspect ratios. This section is free of text, allowing the images room to speak for themselves. Text abounds

in the second section, including essays, synopses, and interviews (Kubrick talks with authors Joseph Heller and Terry Southern as well as journalists). This part is illustrated by production photos, promotional stills, posters from around the world, and unused artwork. Some of the most interesting material is culled from Kubrick's personal archives, much of it appearing in print for the first time. In her preface, editor Alison Castle states that she was endeavouring 'to uncover each and every artifact that could cast light upon Kubrick's creative process,' and indeed this material can prove an Aladdin's cave for the Kubrickophile. Some of the treasures are Kubrick ephemera, such as notebooks, a telegram from Nabokov, brainstorming sheets for the title of *Dr. Strangelove*, as well as script pages, sketches and photographs relating to unfilmed or discarded scenes.

It is easy to lose yourself in *The Stanley Kubrick Archives*, just as it is easy to lose yourself in one of Kubrick's films. The Wagnerian *Totalkunst* which Kubrick brought to bear on all aspects of his work is mirrored in this monumental tome, which is only a coffee-table book in that it is the size of a small coffee table (about 16.5x12"). The physical aspects of the book honour its subject: it boasts high-quality paper, a sturdy and practical binding, not to mention an excellent standard of photographic reproduction. But *The Stanley Kubrick Archives* is more than just a collection of pretty pictures; it contains readable and informative essays, production information ranging from the choice of lenses to on-set politics, as well as interpretations of the films themselves. Notes on music, such an important factor in a Kubrick film, are also included. Three appendices document unrealised productions, print new essays by Kubrick experts, and provide a chronology of the director's life.

Kubrick's legendary love for information storage and retrieval systems is evident everywhere: there is

the filing cabinet for his unrealised *Napoleon*, charting every move Bonaparte made; special stationary designed to record a question and response on the same sheet; a multiplicity of index-cards in different formats recording ideas and references; a plethora of beautiful continuity polaroids and annotated panoramic photographs. Kubrick's mania for referencing and classification is reflected in the design of the book itself. Each film has its own sections, designated by a coloured tab at the edge of the page. Every photo or artifact in section two has a unique number, preceded by a three-character reference number for the film. Though this sounds severe, it makes it very easy to find relevant information in the picture credits!

Although it may seem unfair that one man is being credited with the work of talented and creative cast and crew members, the intense focus of Kubrick's vision, and his ability to bring that vision to the screen seems to justify his authorship. As Herb A. Lightman says of *2001: A Space Odyssey* in a contemporary piece from *American Cinematographer* included in the book: 'On every 70mm frame his imagination, his technical skill, his taste, and his creative artistry are evident.' Appropriately enough, this statement can quite literally be put to the test: initial copies of the book come with a strip of twelve frames from a 70mm print of *2001* owned by Kubrick himself. John Calley, production chief at Warner's at the time of *Barry Lyndon*, said he'd rather have a Kubrick masterpiece for eleven million than a mediocre film for eight million; something similar could be said of *The Stanley Kubrick Archives*. The book is not easily affordable, it retails at around the €200 mark, but considering the colossal scale of the work – the stills, the essays, the interviews, the unique insight into the filmmaker's mind, plus a 1966 interview on an accompanying CD, the Kubrick enthusiast will undoubtedly find it provides value for money.

Lir Mac Cárthaigh