

A weighty dose of Kubrick tales

By Robert K. Elder

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Part of Stanley Kubrick's allure was the aura of enigma that surrounded him.

In later years, the director of "2001: A Space Odyssey," "The Shining" and "A Clockwork Orange" was wrongly pegged a recluse when in reality, he just preferred the company of non-Hollywood types. Interviews were difficult to come by, but those that reached print revealed an introspective, galloping intellect and visual curiosity.

The mammoth, 14-pound volume "The Stanley Kubrick Archives" (Taschen, \$200, though Amazon.com sells copies for \$126) collects some of these interviews and, for the first time, photos, notes and ephemera from the screen legacy of the director, who died in 1999.

Compiled by editor Alison Castle, the 544-page book approaches the exhaustive without being encyclopedic. Split into two sections, the first consists primarily of stills, with the second offering film-by-film interviews, essays and archives.

Kirk Douglas, whom Kubrick directed in 1957's "Paths of Glory" and 1960's "Spartacus," once said of the chain-smoking director, "He'll be a fine director some day. If he falls on his face just once, it might teach him how to compromise."

But it was exactly Kubrick's dedication to his own vision, his obsession with detail that has made him an obsession among cinephiles.

Also in the book is a 70-minute 1966 audio interview conducted by Jeremy Bernstein. If books have souls, Bernstein's rambling, early career-spanning chat with Kubrick provides "Archive" with an eerie but insightful ghost in the machine.

Bernstein gets great quotes, too, without much prompting. At one point, Kubrick admits that on his first film, "Fear and Desire," "I didn't really know anything. ... With the exception of one or two of the actors, they were all terrible actors and I knew nothing about directing actors."

Later, he says, "The history of all the films, practically, that I've done is that no one wanted to particularly make them."

Castle digs up some gems from the archives as well, such



Stanley Kubrick

as a brainstorming page from Kubrick's notebook on titles for what would eventually become "Dr. Strangelove or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb." Other options included "The Bomb and Dr. Strangelove or How to be Afraid 24 Hrs a Day" and "Dr. Doomsday and his Nuclear Wisemen."

From the set, we get glimpses by photographic legend Weegee of the film's food-fight ending (later cut), and an early picture of Peter Sellers as Major Kong. Slim Pickens later filled the role of the bomb-riding pilot after Sellers hurt his ankle "accidentally, on purpose," Kubrick says, to avoid playing a fourth part.

Given Castle's access into the archives, it's a shame that they only make up half the book. But like Michel Ciment's book "Kubrick: The Definitive Edition" (Faber & Faber, \$20), "Archives" enriches and adds depth to Kubrick's legacy.

It's a book that'd be hard to put down, if you could lift it.

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