



far left the War Room in Doctor Strangelove  
left Kubrick on the set of Eyes Wide Shut  
bottom on the set of A Clockwork Orange

book

# the stanley kubrick archives

Taschen's fetish for monumental completism has reached the oeuvre of one of cinema's greatest directors. Real horrorshow, says Chris Hall

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The architecture and design of Stanley Kubrick's films are among the most memorable in film. From the rotating space station in 2001: A Space Odyssey with Olivier Mourgue's Djinn chairs and sofas, to the Korova Milk Bar in A Clockwork Orange, and the open spaces of the Overlook Hotel in The Shining. And then there is the poster art (Philip Castle's A Clockwork Orange and Full Metal Jacket), Saul Bass' opening sequence for Spartacus, the recreation of Vietnam in east London for Full Metal Jacket, and on and on. Indeed, such is the hold that Ken Adam's War Room in Dr Strangelove has held over our collective imagination, that Ronald Reagan is said to have asked where it was when he became president.

The details and information in Taschen's The Stanley Kubrick Archives are as endless as the corridors of the Overlook Hotel. Unfortunately the navigation is about as easy as the maze in the same film.

A real problem with this book is that the first half of it simply reproduces stills from the films, amazing though they are. The size (about 40cm by 30cm), weight (7.7kg) and pagination (544pp) seriously militate against readability – this book needs a lecturer. As a fan of Kubrick's work, you want the archive material, pages from the notebooks, the lost interviews, the telegrams, the catalogues and marginalia, the

set designs, the sketches, not 250 pages of stills from films you already own. Perhaps then a more portable book could have been produced from the second half of this monster. (I put these points to Alison Castle, the book's editor, who replied: "Well, sometimes you have to suffer for art. Not having the film stills would have resulted in a completely different and, in my opinion, inferior book.")

The rare audio CD interview with Kubrick included is welcome (though DVDs of the making of some of the films would have been even better), but the strip of frames "cut from a 70mm print owned by Stanley Kubrick" next to it, is a fetish too far.

Having said that, there are many, many pleasures in this treasure trove of a book. Seeing the stills from Dr Strangelove reveals the film's structure as echoing sexual intercourse: the telephone foreplay, a pilot reading Playboy, General Turgidson stripping to his shirt in the War Room, Slim Pickens' "Yee hah" astride the nuclear missile and the multiple mushroom clouds at the end – Armageddon as petit mort. Indeed, Kubrick had shot a custard pie fight

in the War Room – the money shot, as it were – which he later cut.

There are several brilliant interviews with Kubrick, the most interesting of which is with Joseph Heller, recorded for no particular purpose, presumably at Kubrick's house, in which the two compare Catch-22 and Dr Strangelove. All this belies his reputation as a recluse – indeed, he always did one or two big interviews when a film of his was released. Kubrick comes across as someone far more in touch with reality than reputation suggests. His interests recall a Ballardian sensibility, with his thirst for "invisible literature": medical reports, obscure technical journals, shelving catalogues. He probably read more books on Napoleon – his great unfilmed work – than anyone ever has. Kubrick was an autodidact par excellence, and for him there was no such thing as too much information.

The Stanley Kubrick Archives, Taschen, £100  
www.taschen.com

## Christiane Kubrick interview

Did your husband enjoy the design challenges of his films?

Yes. He had a huge amount of fun with technological problems, especially the huge wheel on 2001: A Space Odyssey. He really liked that side of things. He was very good at finding things out. He was very good on the phone at gathering information. He loved fonts; all of that.

Do you have any props around the house, like the Djinn chair?

We don't have much of the furniture from 2001, the studios burnt them. Stanley didn't sit down and save every precious thing. He always intended to tidy up.

Did he have a favourite designer?

He knew too many of them personally to have a favourite! But he was sensitive to good architecture. He enjoyed looking around – he sent people out to do that for him too – and we would often get lost driving. He also enjoyed looking at glossy architecture magazines.

Did you ever use an architect on your own home?

No. For himself, he was hopeless. He liked to have lots of room. He liked stationery. He would look at catalogues of office things. He always wanted to create order in his films, not at home.

Do you think that sometimes his research was a bit too obsessive?

I know that there were many people that wanted to know where he got certain things from – like the aeroplane dashboard in Dr Strangelove. He was embarrassed about having some of these books around – devil worship books for The Shining, just in case there was an image there that he could use.

