

evolving a sense of composition and movement that would produce dramatic images. His hero was the eccentric tabloid lensman Arthur Fellig, known as "Weegee", who would often arrive at crime scenes before the NYPD. Weegee was brilliant at seizing the unguarded moment, and Kubrick emulated his patience and invisibility, spending hours on the subway surreptitiously photographing fellow passengers, or quietly capturing the apprehension of toothache sufferers in a dentist's waiting room.

While shooting stills, he was already trying out movie techniques – changing angles, creating montages, using depth of focus to create layered compositions. He shot zoos and art galleries, circuses and jazz gigs, Santa Claus and showgirls, street kids and celebrities. Moving from still photography to documentary films was a logical ambition. Kubrick made his mind up when he learnt from a friend that the average segment of the monthly news series *The March of Time* was budgeted at \$40,000. After checking

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the cost of film stock, plus camera rental, sound equipment and other overheads, he reasoned that he could film one of his photo stories for \$3,500 and earn an enormous profit. In 1949, *Look* published his picture essay *Prizefighter*, about the boxer Walter Cartier. He decided to reshoot it as a 16-minute documentary, *Day of the Fight*, using his savings. It actually cost \$3,900 to make, and the best offer from a distributor was under \$1,500. It was apparent he wouldn't

get rich quickly. Kubrick then achieved a deal with RKO Pictures that netted him a tiny \$100 profit, but it was followed by an advance to make another short, *Flying Padre*, about a priest in New Mexico who used a light aircraft to reach his scattered parishioners.

Kubrick decided to turn his attentions fully to film, and resigned from his job at *Look*, which he later said taught him more about life than going to university could have, as well as laying the foundation for his career as a film-maker. He then made a feature film, *Fear and Desire*, about an army patrol trapped behind enemy lines after an air crash, which is attempting to get to safety. He shot it on a shoestring in the San Gabriel mountains in California. The money came from his father, who cashed in a \$10,000 insurance policy, and an uncle who lived in LA. *Fear and Desire* had good art-house reviews, though it never earned its money back. But his career had begun to move, and the next film turned out to be an impressive calling card. ➤➤➤

Killer's Kiss was a noir thriller, set in Manhattan, about a clapped-out boxer who dates a dance-hall hostess. She is facing unwanted advances from its crooked proprietor, but falls for the boxer, who is then targeted by the gangster's hitmen. Again, friends and relatives pitched in to raise the money – this time \$75,000 – and Kubrick blew the last of his savings. On *Killer's Kiss* he was responsible for the story, editing, photography, directing and producing – becoming an auteur by default because he could not pay to hire others.

Kubrick shot in real places – a fight arena, back alleys, a dance hall. As the camera operator he was the fourth figure in the ring, with the referee, shooting the fighters in close-up with an intensity that would not be seen again until Scorsese's *Raging Bull*. He could not afford a permit to film on New York's streets, and scenes in Times Square involving actors were shot without passers-by even noticing, an art he had learnt as a photojournalist. In post-production he was so strapped for money he had to lay in the sound effects himself, as well as dealing with post-synched dialogue.

The low-budget work was released around the world as a B-movie, earning just enough for Kubrick to pay back his investors. The film is forgotten now, but, although made by a 26-year-old, it bears many hallmarks of the later Kubrick, and kick-started the career that would embrace *Spartacus*, *Dr Strangelove*, *2001* and *A Clockwork Orange*. ■

The Stanley Kubrick Archives, edited by Alison Castle (Taschen, price £100, is available at the Sunday Times BooksFirst price of £90, with free postage and packing. Tel: 0870 165 8585 or visit www.timesonline.co.uk/booksfirstbuy)