



UNMADE KUBRICK

Two new books crush Stan The Man's mind grapes...

1: Stanley Kubrick's *Napoleon: The Greatest Movie Never Made*, Alison Castle, Taschen, RRP £450

2: *A.I. Artificial Intelligence, From Stanley Kubrick To Steven Spielberg: The Vision Behind The Film*, Ed: Jan Harlan/Jane M. Struthers, Thames & Hudson, RRP £35

➔ **WHEN STANLEY KUBRICK TOOK ONE OF HIS RARE** holidays, he would make sure that the management of the household pets, running to eight cats and five dogs, was executed to his exact requirements. The instructions, more a file, ran to 39 typed pages of intricate scheduling, crowd control and advanced troubleshooting — never were the two species to be fed at the same time, watch out for infighting among the cats, and beware any victimisation of the three-legged stray dog recently taken in...

In Jon Ronson's marvellous TV documentary, *Stanley Kubrick's Boxes*, the journalist was given rare access to the director's archive still stored at his Childwickbury Manor after his death in 1999. Here, in countless cardboard boxes, was a treasure trove of Kubrickian history. The man simply kept everything (this accumulation of every tiny facet of a subject was one of the reasons he only made 13 films): test shots from 2001, paperbacks of *The Shining* adorned with Kubrick's testy handwriting, script-notes from Barry Lyndon, reams and reams of pictures, letters to and from studios, right down to cheque stubs, receipts and house rules for pet control. He needed it all, like a kind of safety net of accumulated knowledge. Ronson wryly notes that his (mostly unfair) reputation as a mad recluse might have

been fuelled by weekly visits to Harpenden's Ryman to purchase any new lines of stationery they might have had delivered. In amongst the archive was what amounted to a Ryman museum, made up of pristine pads, notebooks and sheaves of paper. And yet Ronson's conclusion was inspiring. In material form, here were the inner-workings of Kubrick's creativity, the clockwork of his genius.

And what a resource...

First published was *The Stanley Kubrick Archives*, a must-have through-the-movies collection of interviews, stories and wonderful pictures, and of such depth it seemed surely to have bled those boxes dry. Hardly. This month we are greeted with two luxuriant epics born from the archive, and, with a relish for the absurd, both study films Kubrick never even made. But, once immersed in their impossible detail, these *unmade Kubricks* (*A.I.*, of course, was ultimately made by Steven Spielberg) tell us even more about the elusive figure than the extant masterpieces. They remained, forever, the unrequited passions of his life.

A biopic of Napoleon had been in Kubrick's sights before he embarked on 2001. "He was one of those rare men who mould the destiny of their own time," he enthused. As Jan Harlan, his brother-in-law and executive producer who has been overseeing these artistic raids on the archive, surmises: "He must have related to him." *Stanley Kubrick's Napoleon: The Greatest Movie Never Made* is less a book than a collection of ten books stored in

a reproduction-Napoleonic tome, each covering different elements: Picture File (a 4,000 selection from a 17,000-strong catalogue of “visual material” of the era); Location Scouting (photos from the 15,000 locations scouted, from France to Romania); Costumes (tests done in Kubrick’s garden; he devised a cost-effective “tear-resistant” paper uniform for the ranks of infantry); Production (the paperwork); Chronology (a database of the lives of the characters collated on colour-coded index cards in an antique cabinet); Correspondence (the letters); Reference (a steamer trunk full of period illustrations, Kubrick’s “mood boards”); and finally, the working draft of the Script.

In short, it’s a staggering assemblage of what anyone (historian or filmmaker) might want to know of Napoleon; invaluable for any biographer of either general. By the time Kubrick pitched it to MGM, his gander was up: “I expect to make the best movie ever made.” From this evidence, less a boast than simple statement of fact. At £450, and with only a thousand published, this is only headed for libraries or Jack Nicholson’s Christmas stocking. Indeed, while it is generally considered that Jack was the man Kubrick had in mind for the French emperor, we are met with deliberations on Peter O’Toole, Alec Guinness and Jean-Paul Belmondo; a confirmation Oskar Werner had the role; and an excited letter from Ian Holm about getting into character.

How did it fail? The changing times in Hollywood, for one thing. In the face of the great ’70s revolution, a three-hour \$60 million historical epic, even from Kubrick, looked bloated and silly. The fact that Sergei Bondarchuk’s recent *Waterloo* went belly up didn’t help, and MGM, then United Artists, chose to break his heart. All that research, all that time and effort, went into storage.

A. I. Artificial Intelligence, From Stanley Kubrick To Steven Spielberg: The Vision Behind The Film needed to be huge just to fit the title on. Less rarefied, and more affordable at £35, it combines Kubrick’s notebooks, an intelligent commentary on the film, and several essays, with wonderful concept sketches by Chris Baker alongside the resulting shots from Spielberg’s vastly underrated version. Spielberg himself had delved into the archive to work from his idol’s notes and illustrations. Kubrick knew there was something Spielbergian about A. I., but the blueprint was all his own.

Again, it feels a rather guilty pleasure as we peer into the thoughts of a very private man: jotted notes in the margins of Brian Aldiss’ story, handwritten dialogue, all the incessant questioning. The ideas were certainly prescient — Dr. Know’s database presages the internet by years, a vision of the future as accurate as his Napoleonic past.

So what can we expect next from the depths of the archive, the gift that will go on giving. *The Burning Secret?* *His One-Eyed Jacks?* *Aryan Papers?* *Lunatic At Large?* *Stanley Kubrick Advanced Pet Care?*

