

WHAT IF /

WRITER

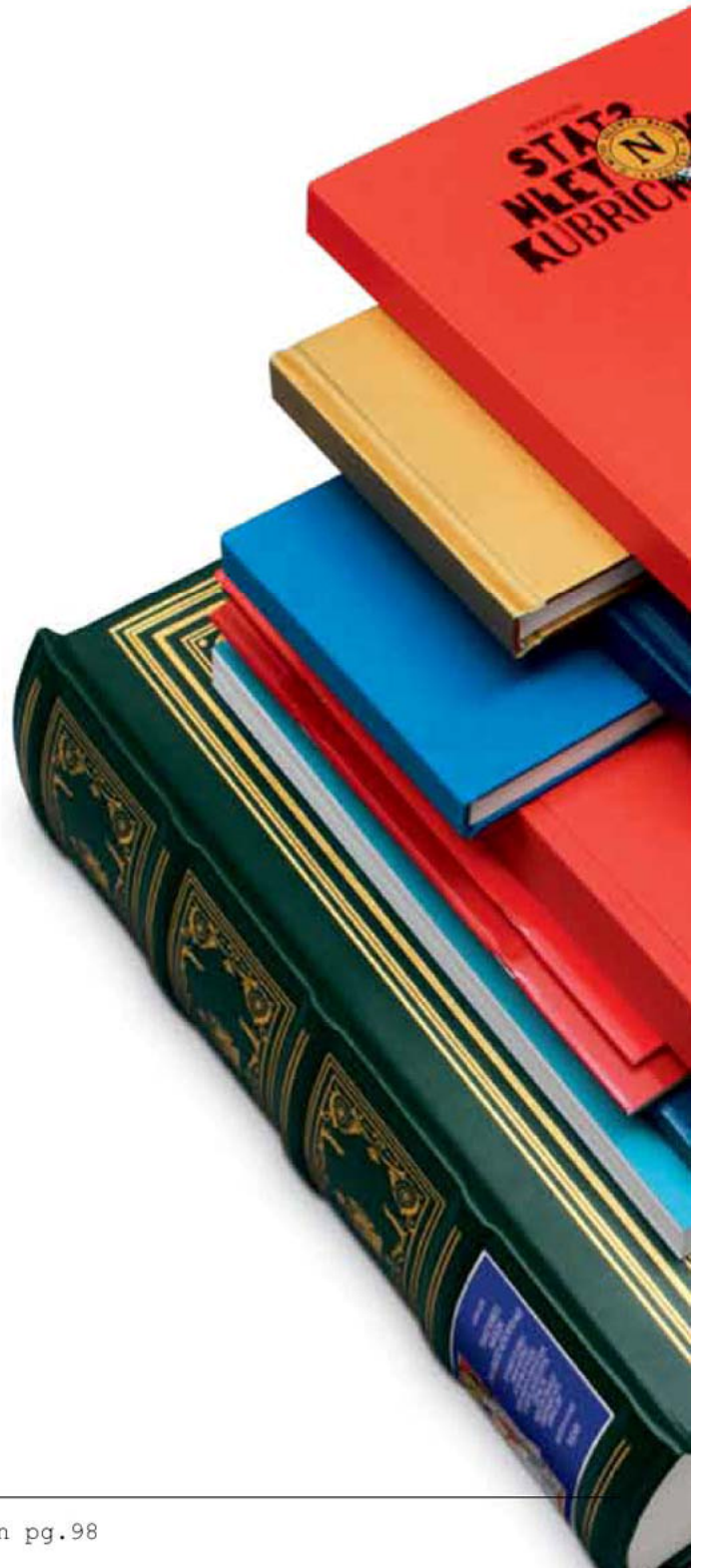
Joy Yoon

There are times when I find myself trapped in a theater, squirming in a butt-numbing plush velour seat wondering to myself, "What the hell am I watching?" I want to say that I research my films before I venture out to the theater. And that statement is partially true. I read reviews, I watch trailers, but sometimes, I leave it to destiny to guide me down the path to cinema nirvana. But with my luck, its safe to say, I'm mentally scarred for life.

Sometimes I'd like to write to all the directors that lead me astray and ask for my money back. Oliver Stone, you owe me \$25, which includes the price of popcorn and of a bottle Pepto Bismo for Alexander. But I'll be lenient and deduct \$5 for your 1982 Conan the Barbarian script. Spike Jonze, I rented Omen from Blockbuster because you told me over the phone that it was "awesome." It wasn't. You owe me \$3.27. Sacha Baron Cohen, you suck. But let's move on. I'm not the kind of girl that likes to dwell.

At the moment, a film that was never made currently piques my interest. Alison Castle's, Stanley Kubrick's Napoleon: The Greatest Movie Never Made (Taschen) is about the director's mysterious unmade film on Napoleon Bonaparte. Slated for production immediately following the release of 2001: A Space Odyssey, and starring Jackson Nicholson as the lead, "Napoleon" was to be a sweeping epic complete with grandiose battle scenes and thousands of extras. But the large-scale biopic of Napoleon, the leader and Emperor of France, was not meant to be. At one point Kubrick wrote his financial backers telling them he was unsure how the film would turn out, but he reassured them by telling them he expected to create "the best movie ever made." The project was cancelled.

Known for his slow method of working (it took him five years to develop 2001:A Space Odyssey), his technical perfectionism and his meticulous attention to detail, Kubrick em-



barked on two years of intensive research to write his original screenplay. With the help of dozens of assistants and an Oxford Napoleon specialist, he amassed an unparalleled trove of research and preproduction material, including approximately 15,000 location scouting photographs from Yugoslavia, Italy, Romania, Belgium, and Brienne, France where Napoleon attended military academy, and 17,000 slides of Napoleonic imagery. Kubrick read almost over 500 books

on the historical figure in his nearly obsessive quest to undercover every piece of information history had to offer.

TASCHEN's sumptuous, \$700, 1,500 limited-edition tribute to this unmade masterpiece makes Kubrick's valiant work on "Napoleon" available to fans for the first time in 40 years. Readers can peruse a selection of Kubrick's correspondence, costume research he had planned to clothe thousands of extras (he planned on using tear-resistant paper which could be printed to look like uniforms from a distance), location scouting photos, research material, and more. A total of ten books, tucked inside of a carved-out reproduction of a Napoleon history book offer fans a chance to experience the creative process of one of cinema's greatest talents as well as his fascinating exploration of the enigmatic ruler, Napoleon Bonaparte.

In hindsight, what if this was cinematic fate? If Napoleon had been made, what would have happened to A Clockwork Orange? A Clockwork Orange's existence only came about because when financing fell through, Kubrick needed a project that he could film quickly on a small budget. Would it have been made after Napoleon? Would someone else have made it? Or what about Barry Lyndon and Kubrick's use of specially adapted high-speed f/0.7 Zeiss camera lens originally developed for NASA? It allowed him to film many scenes only lit by candlelight, creating two-dimensional diffused-light images reminiscent of 18th century paintings. It was also set in the late 18th century just before the Napoleonic Wars, which he laboriously researched. We could also ponder on what would have happened if Kubrick had said yes to the Beatles when they approached him to make J.R.R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings. Peter Jackson, are you listening? Or Kubrick's position that cinema would be unable to accurately portray the holocaust which may have opened the door to Steven Spielberg's Schindler's List. And Tom Tykwer's adaptation of Patrick Süskind's Perfume... Guess what Tom? Kubrick had his eye on it first.

Thanks Taschen. Now film nerds and Kubrick buffs the world over now have something else to debate about.

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