

Great Directors: Kubrick

A Clockwork Orange 1971

Friday, November 14 - Thursday, November 20, 2008



Film Information

Directed by
Stanley Kubrick

Language
English

Running Time
136 minutes

Film Notes

Following the success of his masterpiece, 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY, Stanley Kubrick set out to make what he supposedly predicted would be “the greatest movie ever made”—a biopic of Napoleon Bonaparte based on the dozens upon dozens of books the director had read on the subject. It would never come to be. In fact, Kubrick’s desire to make a film about Napoleon would follow him for the better part of the next twenty years, only to fall, along with THE ARYAN PAPERS and A.I., into a category of unrealized Kubrick ambitions (Steven Spielberg’s version of the latter project notwithstanding).

When production concerns first derailed Kubrick’s Napoleonic epic, the director turned to a book by British author Anthony Burgess called A CLOCKWORK ORANGE. In a career not lacking in controversy, Kubrick’s adaptation would prove to be, without a doubt, the most controversial film he would ever make. In England, opposition to the film was so strong that Kubrick himself chose to pull it from theaters (though it was later revealed that threats against his family may have had something to do with this decision).

Kubrick’s adaptation of the Burgess novel was faithful, and yet critics upset over the movie’s violent ambivalence (and ambivalent violence) focused their ire almost exclusively on the director. Leading the charge was Pauline Kael, a consistent critic of Kubrick’s, who argued that A CLOCKWORK ORANGE the film, while following its source material “so closely that the book might have served as the script,” missed its mark

and devolved into a sort of “porno-violent sci-fi comedy.” Needless to say, Kubrick disagreed, and challenged the oft-repeated argument that his film could be blamed for violence (see the reverse side for his thoughts).

Plenty of others, of course, have defended A CLOCKWORK ORANGE, most notably (if unsurprisingly) actor Malcolm McDowell, whose powerfully unsettling portrayal of Alex helped launch his career. McDowell often speaks with awe of his on-set relationship with the director, despite a chilling effect that took hold after their collaboration had ended.

“When you shot a Kubrick film it was as if you were in a war and part of a very special and very select club,” he told Kubrick biographer Michael Ciment in 1999, the year of the director’s death. “It was very frustrating, and you went through all the emotions a human being could feel. You loved, you hated, you had moments of great sorrow, anger, happiness, laughter. Everything.”

—Casey



OMAHA'S OWN
NONPROFIT CINEMA
402.933.0259
FILMSTREAMS.ORG



RUTH SOKOL
1340 WEBSTER
OMAHA, NE
FILMSTREAMS

DEVOTED TO THE PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FILM AS AN ART FORM · DE

“Naughty! Naughty! Naughty!”

More Information

Screenplay by
Stanley Kubrick

Based on the novel by
Anthony Burgess

Featuring
Malcolm McDowell
Patrick Magee
Michael Bates
Warren Clarke
John Clive
Adrienne Corri
Carl Duering

Cinematography by
John Alcott

Film Editing by
Bill Butler

Country of Origin
UK

“There has always been violence in art. There is violence in the Bible, violence in Homer, violence in Shakespeare, and many psychiatrists believe that it serves as a catharsis rather than a model. I think the question of whether there has been an increase in screen violence and, if so, what effect this has had, is to a very great extent a media-defined issue. I know there are well-intentioned people who sincerely believe that films and TV contribute to violence, but almost all of the official studies of this question have concluded that there is no evidence to support this view. At the same time, I think the media tend to exploit the issue because it allows them to display and discuss the so-called harmful things from a lofty position of moral superiority. But the people who commit violent crime are not ordinary people who are transformed into vicious thugs by the wrong diet of films or TV... The simplistic notion that films and TV can transform an otherwise innocent and good person into a criminal has strong overtones of the Salem witch trials.”

—Stanley Kubrick

Also Recommended, by Kubrick

The Killing 1956
Lolita 1962
Full Metal Jacket 1987
Eyes Wide Shut 1999