



On the set of *Paths of Glory*, Kubrick watches the actors perform with his characteristic look of concentration



# THE KUBRICK LEGACY

**The fabled Stanley Kubrick Archives will be donated to University of the Arts London. In the first of a two-part feature dedicated to their arrival, film historian Philip Kemp introduces the great filmmaker's achievement and the scope of the bequest**

**S**even years after his sudden death at age 70, shortly after completing *Eyes Wide Shut*, controversy still bubbles around the name of Stanley Kubrick. According to various newspaper reports, and several of the unauthorised books about him, he was an eccentric, misanthropic recluse, a control freak and sterile perfectionist. Whereas those who knew him, his friends and family, recall a gregarious friend and a loving husband and father, a man whose energy, optimism and untiring curiosity about every aspect of the world around him belie the pessimism of his films.

Some of the hostility towards Kubrick, more than likely, stems from his refusal to give interviews during the last decades of his life. Rather than try to refute the rumours about his personality and way of life, he preferred to channel his energies into filmmaking. "He used to say, 'It would take up half my time just contradicting all this stuff,'" says his wife Christiane. "So in the end he left them to write what they liked." Frustrated in their attempts to secure an interview, journalists let their imaginations roam free.



**STANLEY KUBRICK**

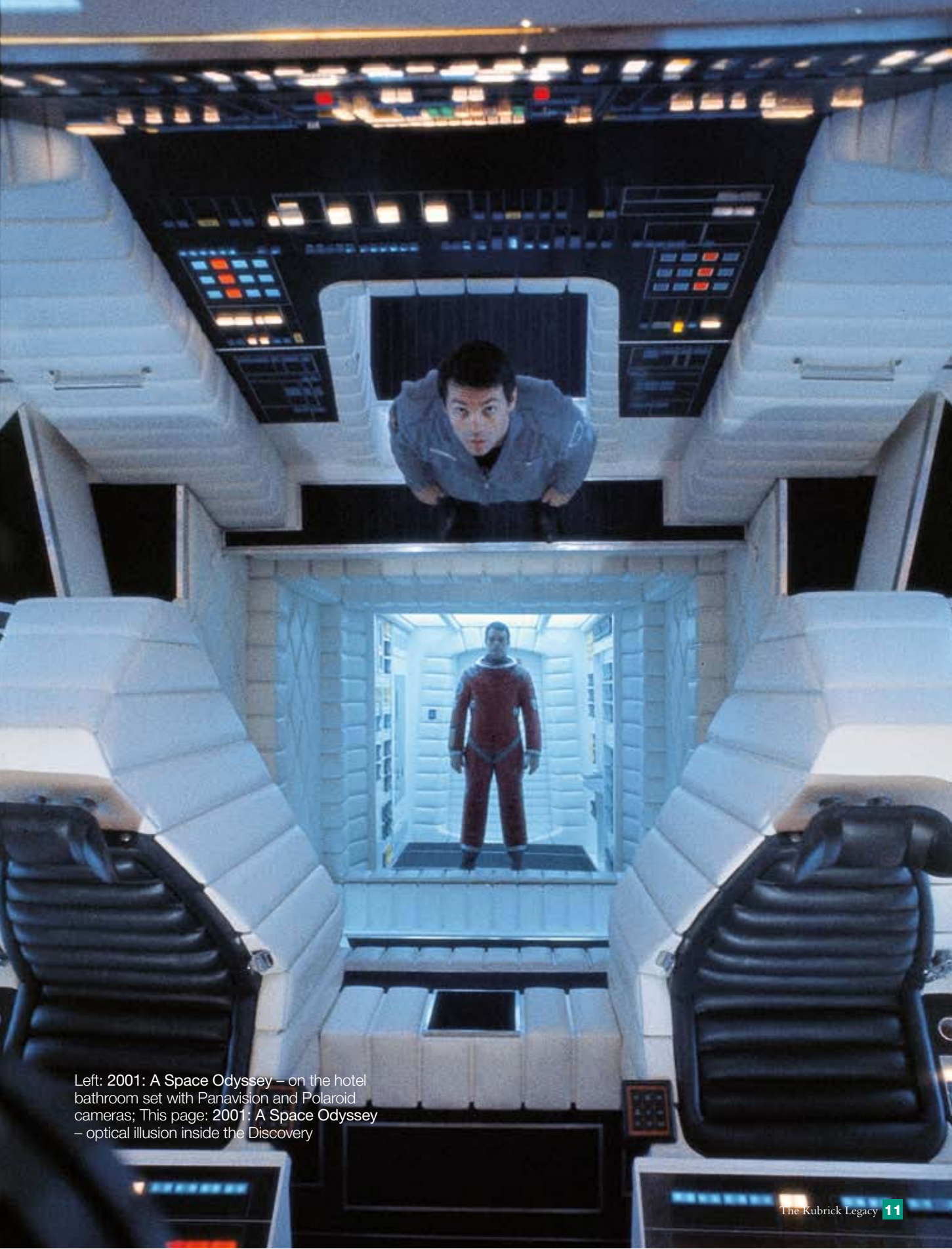
**In the whole history of movies, there has been nothing like Kubrick's vision. It was a vision of hope and wonder, of grace and of mystery, of humour and contradictions. It was a gift to us, and now it's a legacy. I am pleased to hear that his Archives are going to University of the Arts London, which will ensure his legacy and vision are kept alive.**

Steven Spielberg, Director

No question, Kubrick was an exceptional and enviable figure. In the latter half of his career, Kubrick cut himself a deal that most other filmmakers could only dream of. After the wranglings and star tantrums and studio re-cuttings involved in *Spartacus* (1960), the disputes with Marlon Brando that led him to quit *One-Eyed Jacks* (1961), Kubrick resolved he would never again make a film unless he was granted total artistic freedom. And he got it. From *Lolita* (1962) onwards, the studios – exclusively Warner Brothers from *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) – funded whatever he chose to make. The script, casting, crew, budget and final cut all remained under Kubrick's control. Physically he cut himself off from Hollywood, electing not to travel outside the British Isles, and from here his movies emerged at ever more protracted intervals. At the outset of his career Kubrick made seven feature films in ten years, in the remaining 36 years, just six more. *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999) was two years in the making under conditions of stringent secrecy, and Kubrick died not long after editing was completed.

Kubrick's work – the 13 feature films plus the three early documentary shorts – stands as a monument to his fiercely independent genius as a director. In the filmographies of even the greatest directors one can identify the routine assignments, the films they took on just to pay the rent or keep the studio happy. Not so with Kubrick. Even in his earlier work, when he was still to some degree subject to studio diktats, there are no items that look like makeweights. Every film that he directed, he made because he wanted to – passionately and urgently wanted to. According to Jan Harlan, his Executive Producer and brother-in-law, in order to make a film Kubrick “had to fall in love with the story”.

It was Kubrick's third feature, *The Killing* (1956) that made his name and announced the arrival of a major new filmmaking talent. Besides presenting an ingeniously structured and highly original take on the heist-movie genre, it featured the objective, detached stance that Kubrick preferred to adopt towards his characters, standing back and watching as they flailed helplessly towards their inevitable fate. *The Killing* never wastes too much time inviting sympathy for its bickering crew of petty crooks, and it's instructive to compare it with its model, John Huston's *The Asphalt Jungle* (1950) – with which it shares Sterling Hayden in the lead. Huston's film, though never sentimental, is veined with a sense of wry compassion;



Left: 2001: A Space Odyssey – on the hotel bathroom set with Panavision and Polaroid cameras; This page: 2001: A Space Odyssey – optical illusion inside the Discovery



**Being governed by emotions is a great asset of mankind in a way, however, our downfall will be caused by the illusion and belief that we are governed by rational thinking.**

Stanley Kubrick



Kubrick is more fascinated by the mechanics of the heist, and by the way the carefully devised plans unravel under the stress of internal dissensions and jealousies. But his narrative control is so exact and compelling – especially in the masterly ‘fragmented time-frame’ technique of the heist itself, reinventing the whole concept of the flashback – that we’re happy to stand back and watch along with him, sharing his unblinking view.

Nor is it true, as some critics have suggested, that Kubrick lacks compassion. There’s a fierce sense of anger at the cynical mistreatment of the French soldiery by their WWI commanders in *Paths of Glory* (1957) – a film that cut close enough to the bone to be banned by an outraged French government. Kubrick’s version of *Lolita* may have been rather less faithful to Nabokov’s novel than Adrian Lyne’s 1997 remake, but Lyne’s version, sober and prettified, only emphasised how much more warmth and sympathy Kubrick brought to the story – especially in the performances he drew from James Mason and Shelley Winters. How much more humour, too. Through much of Kubrick’s work there runs a strain of dark, subversive comedy, tempering the detachment, the controlling voiceover narrations, the Olympian despair at human folly. No other film, before or since, has nailed the towering idiocies of the Cold War like *Dr Strangelove* (1963) – and all the more effectively for treating them as material for knockabout farce. (“Gentlemen,” protests the ineffectual US President as his top brass and the Soviet Ambassador tussle clumsily on the floor, “you can’t fight here – this is the War Room!”)

A voracious reader, Kubrick loved to adapt literary works for the screen, but was never hampered by over-faithfulness to the originals. Novelists were sometimes none too pleased with what he did to their work. Anthony Burgess saw the film of *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) as a vulgarisation of his dystopian novel, and Stephen King objected that with *The Shining* (1979) Kubrick had taken a simple horror story and inflated it into an overblown display of self-indulgent visual pyrotechnics. But here again it can be argued that Kubrick, himself sometimes accused of humourless self-importance, brought a welcome leaven of irreverence into some over-solemn originals.

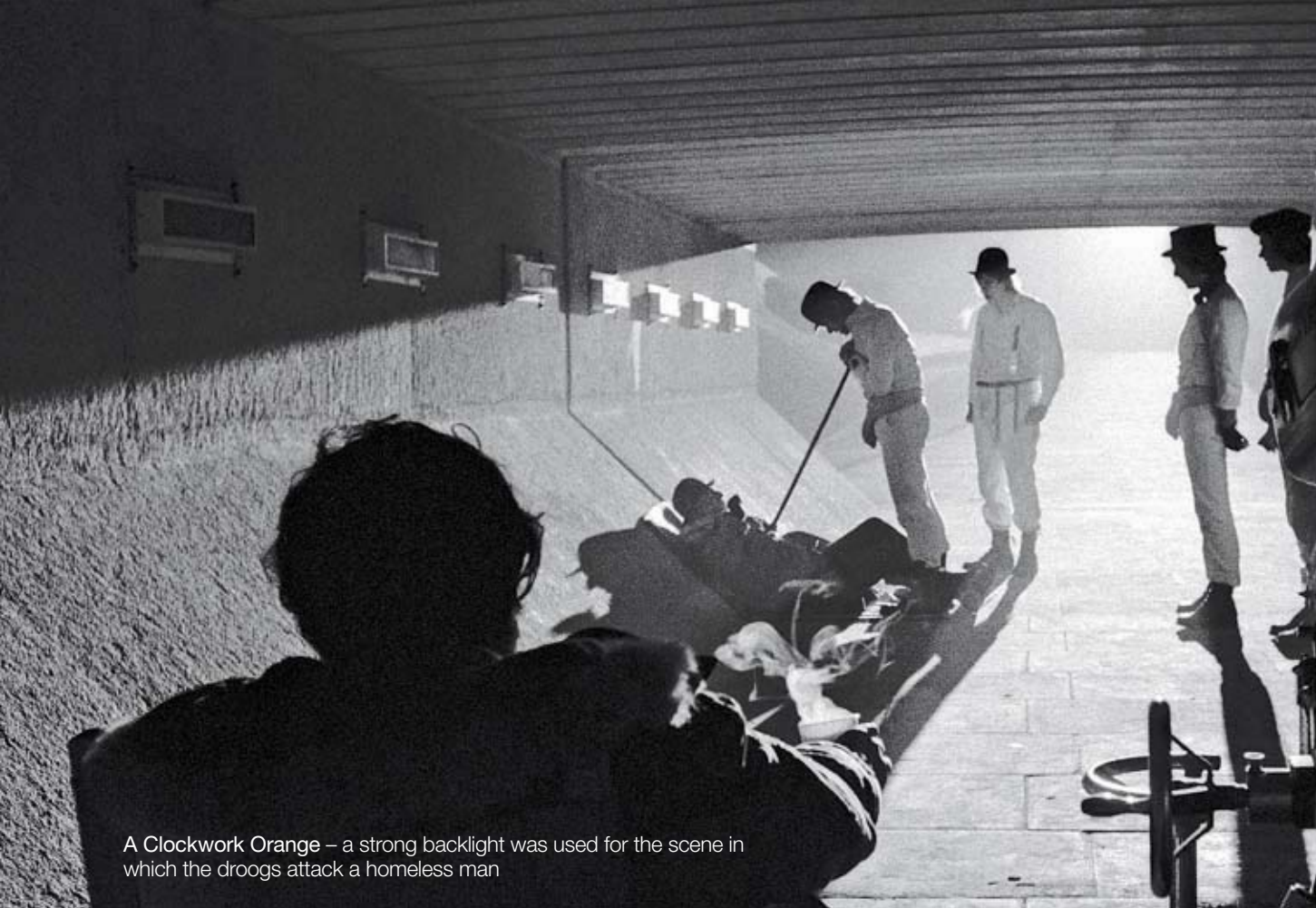
The pop-art, comic-strip exuberance of *A Clockwork Orange* shrugs off Burgess’s dour lapsed-Catholic determinism, while in *The Shining* a welter of gory jokes and Jack Nicholson’s knowing self-parody of a



While a film like *2001: A Space Odyssey* may at first appear overly reliant on technical effects, it is in fact layered with more traditional, theatrical techniques such as costume and make-up.

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Top left: Kubrick on the set of *Dr Strangelove*, with Sterling Hayden and Peter Sellers; Bottom left: *The Shining* – two cameras were rolled up tracks on the stairs to capture Shelley Duvall's performance in tight and wide shots simultaneously; Above: *2001: A Space Odyssey* – the replica hotel suite at the end of the film was lit entirely through the floor; Left: Press brochure for *The Killing*



A Clockwork Orange – a strong backlight was used for the scene in which the droogs attack a homeless man

**The Kubrick Archives provide a rare insight into one of the great cultural figures of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Within, amongst other treasures, the shelves of boxes, containing photographs, notes and plans, Kubrick has left us evidence of his thinking process and offers us the opportunity for a deeper understanding of his creative decision-making. The conservation expertise within the University now has the wonderful challenge and responsibility to ensure that this collection is cared for while also being made available in order that this knowledge may be shared and provide inspiration for future generations.**

Professor Paul Coldwell  
Director of the Postgraduate Programme  
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performance enliven a fairly banal supernatural yarn. (King's own remake, a TV mini-series, is a dull thing by comparison.) In the same way, the slyly satirical treatment of the Roman senators keeps *Spartacus* watchable long after the muscle-bound heroics of the slave revolt have palled.

Kubrick's restless desire to innovate made him one of the most influential of filmmakers. Having re-jigged the conventions of noir thrillers in *The Killing* and of war movies in *Paths of Glory*, he single-handedly invented the latter-day science fiction movie with *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968). Spielberg, Lucas and just about every other latter-day maker of cinematic space operas owe him a huge debt. It's typical, too, of Kubrick's audacity to make a movie aimed at a mainstream mass audience that virtually jettisons plot and dialogue – and whose most compelling and engaging character is a megalomaniac shipboard computer. Nothing that happens to the humans in the film is anywhere near as moving as the brain death of the computer HAL, regressing into nursery rhymes and babbling idiocy as his circuits are disconnected.



**A Clockwork Orange** was the gaudy, ultra-violent must-see of the early 70s. Its influence on young actors, writers and filmmakers can still be felt and seen today in terms of the visceral performances, the hybrid, pun-filled language and its innovative cinematography.

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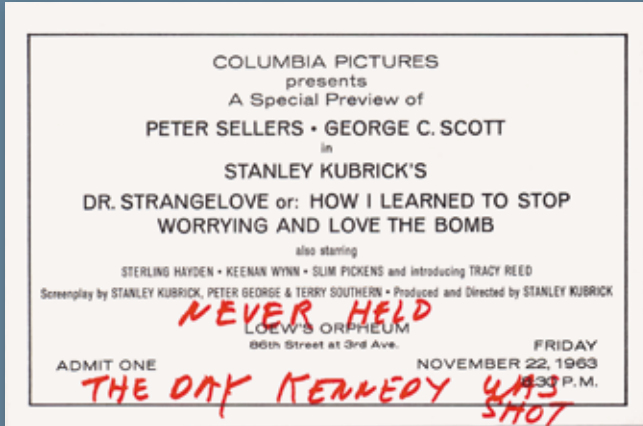
**It is extremely interesting to see the links between Kubrick's background in photography and his work and research for film. Investigating his relationship between these two art forms is incredibly exciting for the Media School.**

Cathy Greenhalgh  
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Above right: *Full Metal Jacket* – the scene in which Joker and Rafterman arrive at the outskirts of Hue; Right: *The Shining* – a photograph of the Timberline Lodge in Mt. Hood, Oregon, which served as the model for the Overlook and was also filmed by a second unit for the approach shots. Among Kubrick's instructions for the crew is the reminder to frame for a 1.85:1 aspect ratio but to "protect" the full 1.33:1 frame; this reflects his policy, for his last three films, of simultaneously composing widescreen for theatrical release and full frame for television



For *Barry Lyndon* (1975), his adaptation of Thackeray's early novel, Kubrick demanded the impossible – a camera that would shoot scenes lit only by candlelight. And being Kubrick he achieved it by an unprecedented device, adapting a Mitchell BNC camera to take an ultrafast 50mm f0.7 Zeiss lens originally developed for NASA. The result: scenes of a soft, luminous beauty that no other period film, before or since, has ever equalled.



Kubrick took responsibility not only for the films themselves in their finished form, but for the marketing of them – the posters, publicity material and trailers. And as Ryan Gilbey recently pointed out in the *New Statesman*, he even revolutionised the humble trailer and turned it into an art form: “*Dr Strangelove* was advertised with a breakneck collage of flashing words combined with snippets of dialogue to create new and surreal meanings; it may not have explained much, but you got a sense of that film’s savage absurdity.”



Was Kubrick a perfectionist? Yes, if that implies he would take the time and trouble needed to have his films turn out just the way he wanted them. But Kubrick’s perfectionism never equated with extravagance. “All the money was on the screen,” Christiane Kubrick points out. “It wasn’t wasted on shiny cars or shiny offices.” “He would spend no more money in a week,” adds Jan Harlan, “than comparable productions spent in a day. His style was constantly to question himself, his own decisions, and therefore to change his script.”



Kubrick could be tough on his actors, too: footage exists of him bullying a performance out of a clearly distraught Shelley Duvall in *The Shining*, and both Tom Cruise and

Nicole Kidman are said to have found *Eyes Wide Shut* an exacting experience. Jack Nicholson, a more resilient character, simply observed that his director “gives a new meaning to the word meticulous”. And Shelley Duvall later acknowledged that she had learned more from working with Kubrick than on all her other films. Under his guidance several actors hit career-best levels. Was Peter Sellers ever better than in *Dr Strangelove* or *Lolita*, or Malcolm McDowell than in *A Clockwork Orange*? And Kubrick’s visual genius created images and sequences that have attained iconic status and linger indelibly in the memory – McDowell’s half-mascara’ed, bowler-hatted thug-face, Mason painting Sue Lyon’s toenails in *Lolita*, Sellers’ manic Strangelove heiling in his wheelchair, a grinning Nicholson axing his way through the bathroom door in *The Shining* and the *2001* spaceships tilting gracefully to the strains of Strauss.

Kubrick’s untiring thoroughness and insatiable appetite for information were nowhere better reflected than in the exhaustive preparation he put in for every film – both those he completed and those, like his great Napoleon project or his treatment of the Holocaust, *Aryan Papers*, that remain tantalisingly unrealised. This thoroughness led to the creation of the Kubrick Archives – a staggering collection of some 800 large boxes containing scripts, stills, props, posters, costumes, documents, equipment and a vast library of books. Perhaps no other film director ever accumulated such a vivid, tangible record of his life’s work and the Archives are being presented, as a gift, to University of the Arts London.

Christiane Kubrick and Jan Harlan are in no doubt that the Archives are going to the best possible – and most appropriate – home. “Stanley lived here in England, he worked here, he made his home here,” says Harlan. “So his Archives should stay here.” Christiane, herself a painter and a graduate of St Martin’s, believes that her husband – “though he never thought he was going to die” – would have loved to know his collection would be made available to students, researchers and future filmmakers.

Most creative artists, in the immediate aftermath of their death, undergo a period of reassessment. Today, Stanley Kubrick’s reputation stands if anything even higher than it did during his lifetime. His films are in little danger of being forgotten, and the imminent availability of his Archives can only enhance interest in one of the most influential – and intriguing – figures in world cinema.



## KUBRICK FILMOGRAPHY

1950	<b>DAY OF THE FIGHT</b>
1951	<b>FLYING PADRE</b>
1953	<b>THE SEAFARERS</b>
1953	<b>FEAR AND DESIRE</b>
1955	<b>KILLER'S KISS</b>
1956	<b>THE KILLING</b>
1957	<b>PATHS OF GLORY</b>
1960	<b>SPARTACUS</b>
1962	<b>LOLITA</b>
1964	<b>DR STRANGELOVE</b>
1968	<b>2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY</b>
1971	<b>A CLOCKWORK ORANGE</b>
1975	<b>BARRY LYNDON</b>
1980	<b>THE SHINING</b>
1987	<b>FULL METAL JACKET</b>
1999	<b>EYES WIDE SHUT</b>

Far left: Kubrick’s note on an invitation to the preview of *Dr Strangelove*; Left, top to bottom: **Barry Lyndon** – Ryan O’Neal and Hardy Krüger with Kubrick; The director with Peter Sellers as Dr Strangelove; **Lolita** – Peter Sellers, James Mason and Kubrick on the set of the hotel porch; **Eyes Wide Shut** – Kubrick with Tom Cruise on the costume shop set; Above: Sterling Hayden with Kubrick on the set of **The Killing**. All images courtesy of the Stanley Kubrick Estate.

The Stanley Kubrick Archives will arrive at University of the Arts London from autumn 2006 and will be housed at London College of Communication. The Archives will be available to researchers from late 2007. For further information about the project, visit [www.arts.ac.uk/kubrick.htm](http://www.arts.ac.uk/kubrick.htm)

Part two of this article will feature in the autumn/winter 2006 issue.