

2001 between Kubrick and Clarke: The Genesis, Making and Authorship of a Masterpiece

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Filippo Ulivieri and Simone Odino, *2001 Between Kubrick and Clarke: The Genesis, Making and Authorship of a Masterpiece* (Wrocław: Amazon, 2019), pp. 181, ISBN 9781703278231 (pb), £14.99.

Just who was responsible for the creation of *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968)? Stanley Kubrick? It is a film that is after all branded as Stanley Kubrick's *2001*. But what of Arthur C. Clarke, the science fiction writer that Kubrick collaborated with for four years on the project? Or the myriad technicians, supervisors, and creative talent that were employed throughout the film's production? Are any of these not deserving of authorial credit? These are questions that are central to Filippo Ulivieri and Simone Odino's book, *2001 Between Kubrick and Clarke*. And while the centrepiece, if you will, of the book is an emphasis on the working relationship of Kubrick and Clarke, along the way the author's bring into sharp focus the crucial need to fully contextualise the process of collaboration that took place on *2001*, from its development through to its marketing and distribution. This was, Ulivieri and Odino argue, Kubrick's greatest achievement, his constant determination to find and motivate 'talented collaborators' (p.127).

2001 Between Kubrick and Clarke consists of a foreword by Dan Richter (the choreographer that played Moonwatcher) and three substantial chapters, each of which is based on extensive archival research, including at the Stanley Kubrick Archive at the University of the Arts London and the Arthur C. Clarke Collection at the Smithsonian Institution. Two of the chapters are revised and updated editions of work that originally appeared in *Understanding Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey: Representation and Interpretation* (Intellect, 2018), while the final chapter is an account of Clarke and Kubrick's working relationship, largely told from the perspective of the former, and expanded from an article published in the Italian newspaper *Il Giornale*. Taken together, they provide an

illuminating narrative of how *2001* came into being, of Kubrick's methods as a producer, writer and director, and of the many aborted creative pathways that were taken throughout the course of production, hinting at a *2001: A Space Odyssey* that might have been.

Chapter One takes the weeks and months after the release of *Dr. Strangelove* (1964) as its starting point, tracing Kubrick's intellectual motivations and creative explorations up to the moment that he settled on collaborating with Clarke and loosely adapting the author's short story *The Sentinel* (1951). Terming this period in Kubrick's career as an 'exploratory phase' (p.13), the chapter reveals Kubrick's overriding obsession with key themes in the early 1960s, including overpopulation, nuclear war, and the search for extra-terrestrial life. Along the way, it becomes clear that Kubrick had a long-standing interest, if not quite passion, for science fiction, even becoming fascinated at the prospect of adapting Gavin Blakeney's BBC radio serial *Shadow on the Sun* (1961), a drama that Clarke deemed as a predictable 'invasion of Earth' story (p.28). Even though Kubrick purchased the rights to adapt the story, it never came to anything. It may well have been, as the author's argue, that Kubrick viewed *Shadow on the Sun* as a safe means of starting out work in a genre 'in which he had no previous experience' and at a time when he had no obvious collaborator (p. 33). It was one of many potential creative paths that Kubrick ventured down during this exploratory phase. But the overriding principle of Kubrick's search for a new story seems to have its roots in *Dr. Strangelove*, with that film hinting towards a more progressive, even transformative society. The author's argue that Kubrick took a similar approach with *2001*, looking for a story and a collaborator that would allow him to make a film about a 'possible path for moral change' (p. 39).

Chapter Two provides one of the most in-depth and comprehensive accounts of the production of *2001* (Michael Benson's recent *Space Odyssey* [2018] notwithstanding), effectively written as day-by-day production calendar. The aim of the chapter is to 'convey a

sense of the sheer magnitude and daunting scale of the gigantic production machines that Kubrick set into motion' (p.49). Starting on 17 February 1964, when Kubrick, lunching with then head of sales at Columbia Pictures, Roger Caras, remarked he would like to make a science fiction film, and ending on '1969 and beyond', the production calendar reveals the extent to which Kubrick was collaborating, experimenting, and even delegating creative agency to a range of technicians, artists, and engineers. By constructing a production calendar, the author's have managed to capture the frustrations and even failures that were ever present throughout the making of *2001*. Though, the perspective of Kubrick is perhaps too often privileged over that of other workers. In years to come, it would be interesting to view the making of the film through the eyes of an 'average' below-the-line worker.

Chapter Three is the core of this book and provides one of the most thoroughly researched, contextualised and entertaining accounts I have ever read of the working relationship between Kubrick and Clarke. In many respects, the entire production of *2001* depended on the effectiveness of this relationship and of the ideas the two men generated. The chapter takes an innovative approach, writing the account of the relationship from the perspective of Clarke and, to some extent, de-centring Kubrick as the object of research. The chapter brings to light the exasperating process of convincing Kubrick to allow the publication of Clarke's *2001* novel, which he had written concurrent to the production of the film. The author's make use of overlooked correspondence between Clarke and literary agent Scott Meredith to highlight how Kubrick was purposely delaying the publication of the novel for his own means. What emerges is the very slow disintegration of the working relationship between Kubrick and Clarke, with the former seemingly sapping the creative energy of the latter. And while Clarke latter admitted that Kubrick was right in delaying the novel – it became a substantial bestseller – his ultimate verdict, when briefly reunited with Kubrick in the 1990s to work on an adaptation of Brian Aldiss's *Supertoys Last All Summer Long*, was

that Kubrick had too much control. For Clarke, this meant long-stretches of time in which he dedicated himself to working exclusively for Kubrick, at the expense of giving up other paid work.

2001 Between Kubrick and Clarke is the latest in a continuing line of scholarly works dedicated to Stanley Kubrick and, specifically, *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Perhaps, you might ask, is it not time to halt this factory of academic publishing devoted to Kubrick? Surely there is nothing left to learn. But on the contrary, this book, like other recent works, shows how unique Kubrick is as a case study of production cultures in the American and British film industries, from development through to marketing, distribution, and even dubbing. The book's use of the Stanley Kubrick Archive also demonstrates the privilege of Kubrick scholars, me included, in having access to such a rare and near-complete record of not only one man's life, but of his entire career. But simply referring to the archive is not enough in revealing new perspectives. Olivieri and Odino prove how archival research combined with innovative methods of interpreting the material available – say by structuring it to reveal insights into the personal and working relationship of Kubrick and Clarke – can provide wholly original and holistic insights into the full range of collaborations necessary to make a science fiction masterpiece.

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