



# DVD MOVIE CENTRAL

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## A CLOCKWORK ORANGE *40th Anniversary Blu-ray Edition*



Review by Michael Jacobson

Stars: Malcolm McDowell, Patrick Magee, Adrienne Corbi, Miriam Karlin

Director: Stanley Kubrick

Audio: DTS HD 5.1

Video: Anamorphic Widescreen 1.77:1

Studio: Warner Bros.

Features: See Review

Length: 137 Minutes

Release Date: May 31, 2011

*"I was cured, all right."*

### Film \*\*\*\*

There are some images in life, like traffic accidents, forest fires and others that are utterly horrifying to look upon, yet somehow...we can't look away. *A Clockwork Orange* is a film with many such moments. This is one of the most disturbing films ever made, both in terms of content and visuals, and remains as potent and controversial today as when it was first released nearly thirty years ago.

The protagonist, Alex (McDowell) is a thoroughly unlikable character. He and his gang of 'droogs' get their jollies from spending their nights indulging in acts of 'ultraviolence'. They brutally beat an old homeless man. They leave another gang of toughs near death. They invade a couple's home and force the husband to watch as they rape his wife in front of his eyes. This is all within the first fifteen minutes of the film, and I have known some people not to make it past that point.

But what all of this leads to is one of the greatest examples of dramatic irony in storytelling. Alex eventually goes to prison for murder, only to get out early by agreeing to an experimental treatment. In one of the most bizarre, frightening and fascinating sequences, we watch Alex undergo a chemically induced

transformation, whereby his body learns to react with harsh debilitating sickness whenever he feels the urge to indulge his propensity towards sex and violence. And in this helpless weakened condition, he is turned loose on the streets, where one by one, all of the victims he wronged earlier in the picture get to extract a measure of revenge against him.

The film centers on the idea of conflict, in many forms and ways. The conflicts between youth and old age, the conflicts between good and evil, and without naming names, certainly a conflict between extreme liberalism and extreme conservatism. Turns out Alex is a pawn for both sides as they argue over how best to deal with the ever growing problem of violent criminals. Even the color schemes are constantly in conflict in the film...hardly anything matches. Bright oranges are constantly juxtaposed with deep blues, creating a jarring effect on the eyes. Check out some of the clothes being worn, too, especially by Alex's parents...everything is a combination of colors that are completely mismatched. It's like Martha Stewart's worst nightmare, but Kubrick knew what he was doing, and the effect is intentional. Even the classical music score, mostly by Beethoven, is performed on electronic synthesizers, creating a strange conflicted effect as well.

This is truly a film designed to unsettle the audience, so not everyone will embrace it. But one thing is for sure: once you've seen it, you'll never forget it.

#### **Video \*\*\*\***

It is indeed funny how the colors of the world sometime only look real on cinema, or in this case, high definition. Each Warner Kubrick re-release is at least a case of constant steps of improvement. Though the latest DVD edition looked good, the new anniversary edition Blu-ray is even more spectacular. The jarring color schemes are brighter and bolder than ever, with far more detail. I always enjoy it when I suddenly see new sights in a film I've viewed countless times. Here, you can read the rather creative graffiti on the walls, or even read the little signs in the record shop. Contrast is what this movie is all about, and HD offers it in abundance.

#### **Audio \*\*\*\***

Blu-ray capabilities offer a more immersive experience than previously available, and perhaps the biggest beneficiary is Walter Carlos' amazing synthesized classical score, which, as Alex would say, cracks and booms and offers plenty of dynamic range. Dialogue is clean and clear, and the bigger sequences really open up for an engaging listen.

#### **Features \*\*\*\***

All the extras you expect are here, and even more. There are a pair of new features, including a fresh look back at the film from Malcolm McDowell and an examination of the film's enduring cultural impact. There is also a solid commentary track with Malcolm McDowell and historian Nick Redman...a real treat. There is a Channel Four documentary on the film, a making-of featurette, and the original trailer.

A bonus disc includes two full documentaries: one, *O Lucky Malcolm*, examines the career of Malcolm McDowell, while the other, *Stanley Kubrick: A Life in Pictures* is a wonderful tribute to the late director's life and work. You can also make a bonus digital copy of the film for your portable player. Finally, the entire package comes in hard book form, with lots of notes and photos to take you back to the original release of the film. Outstanding!

#### **Summary:**

*A Clockwork Orange* is one of Kubrick's most visual triumphs, and his sense of cinematic storytelling serves the classic novel by Burgess well. It's a disturbing, violent film with many horrifying and unforgettable images, even after 40 years, but all of it serves the terrific irony of a tale of crime and punishment, of ideals and results, and of just what constitutes morality.