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Malcolm McDowell and Leon Vitali Talk A CLOCKWORK ORANGE on the 40th Anniversary

by [Hunter Daniels](#)

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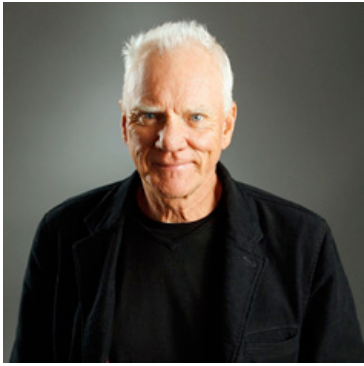


Last week I had the distinct pleasure of interviewing Malcolm McDowell and Leon Vitali for the upcoming 40th Anniversary [Blu-Ray](#) edition of Stanley Kubrick's seminal sci-fi satire, *A Clockwork Orange*, which hits stores on May 31st. While most of you know McDowell from his career defining turn as Alex in Kubrick's film, Vitali is also an important part in the filmmaker's legacy. After first collaborating with Kubrick on *Barry Lyndon*, where he played the role of Lord Bullingdon, Vitali became a friend and adviser to the iconoclastic director. After Kubrick's death, Vitali was put in charge of the DVD restoration of all of Kubrick's films.

We got to [chat](#) for about an hour, so this interview is loaded with great information on both the artistic elements of acting in a film and the technical minutia of actually making a film. We discussed everything from the invention of Steadicam, to Kubrick's often blunt interactions with actors, to Anthony Burgess's original thoughts on the film adaptation of his novel, and much, much more. Hit the jump for the full interview.

In case you don't get the chance to read the full interview, here are a few highlights:

- McDowell scratched his cornea and almost went blind during the filming of the Ludivco sequence.
- McDowell thinks that audiences are more attuned to satire today, ready to laugh at the satire.
- McDowell didn't have to audition for the part. He was cast based upon the strength of *If*.
- Kubrick never planned out the shoots in advance, they would just experiment on set until it worked. This is how the infamous *Singin' in the Rain* scene took shape.
- McDowell dislikes the 21st chapter of *A Clockwork Orange* rather intensely, claiming that Burgess only wrote it as a concession to his publisher, scribbling it out in under two hours.
- The Droog's [uniforms](#) were inspired by McDowell's cricket gear.
- Arriflex and Phillips were some of the companies that came to Kubrick with prototype [technology](#) for his feedback.
- Kubrick originally only wanted his film to be available in full screen on home [video](#), not wide screen.
- Vitali defends Kubrick's tendency to do dozens of takes as artistically courageous and a deep trust in his instincts.



Question: Malcolm, just to start out, your perspective 40 years later.

Or to look back.

McDowell : Many, many white hairs later.

What sticks out mostly, your recollection of the movie? After 40 year, what immediately comes to mind?

McDowell : You know, it's a bit like, a sort of long lost member of the family. And occasionally, you know, there are anniversaries, you know, that this long lost relation turns up at. And this is the big one because it's the 40 years, and I hope I'm around for the 50th but, you know, It's really hard, really, to be concise about it because it's such an extraordinary film in many ways.

And making the film was a very different feeling of course than what I have now. Because when I was making it, I mean, I knew it was good. I knew the work was really good. But, you know, I didn't know how good. I certainly didn't realize it was going to be iconic in status, which its sort of become. Its become bigger than any of us.

Anthony Burgess had no idea when he wrote that book. And let's face it, it's Burgess' great masterwork, *A Clockwork Orange*. And it's an incredible book. And of course, Kubrick was the right man to make it an incredible film because the book is so dense in a way that you really needed a brilliant editor to really, you know, get to what it's really about. I think Stanley did an incredible job.

And in fact, I was with Burgess when it opened, when he'd first seen it, before he'd had time to... change his story. But at first his reaction was, "It's absolutely brilliant. It's one of the best films I have ever seen from a book." So, that's what his initial reaction was. And I think later on, you know, when he wasn't paid anything – not that he was entitled to it – I think that he felt that, you know, that the movie was making so much money that someone should have given him a check. Which, you could argue, that they should have done.



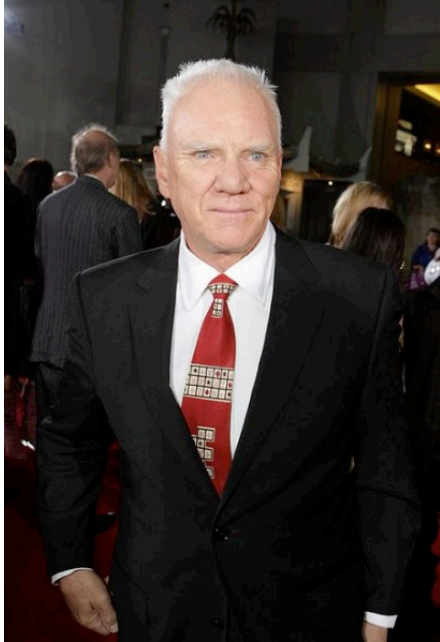
Well, artistically, it was certainly a push in a certain direction for you. Physically, from what we've seen from the behind the scenes, it definitely took its toll on you. I mean, at one point, one of the guys was saying that, you know, that actors were so whiny, that Kubrick was saying that, "We're out here doing this all the time and the actors get to go back to their trailer. So he has to crawl around in the mud? And so he has to get his head dunked? Who cares if his eyes have to be, you know." But did it take a physical toll?

McDowell : Yes, it did. It did. In fact, one of the sparks, you know the electricians, he said, "Hey

Malc's I think he's trying to kill you." But he was serious! I went, "Really?" I think that's actually, that was very much his attitude, basically.

I didn't really mind doing it in the end because I knew it was a good cause and I knew that the film was going to be extraordinary in many ways, simply because of my own stuff, because, I was in practically every frame of it. So, as an actor, I was doing things that I had only dreamed of. Because I'm from a country where acting is taken very seriously, it's a very serious profession. It's not just a cosmetic thing; "You look right, you're fine." You know, you are trained, although I wasn't, you do your apprenticeship on the stage in repertory theater in one of the big companies like the Royal Shakespeare company, which I did, and all that. So when it came to doing films they were relatively easy, in a sense, in that, you know, I didn't have to carry a play, which is hard work.

With the eye scene, how physical did it get at that point? Because, from what we're seeing, if they didn't put those drops in every 15 seconds you could have gone blind. I mean, was there an emotional, mental toll that was going on? Because, apparently, it did scratch your cornea at some point.



McDowell : yes, of course it did. You know, no. I trusted the doctor...well actually, he showed me a picture of this patient with these lid locks – which is what they're called – and Stanley showed me a picture of it. And I went, "Oh yes. Very nice, ooh! Look at that." And he goes, "No, I want you to do that." And I go, "How can I possibly do that? The guy's got these things stuck in his eyes. No actor's going to do that." And he goes, "Oh yeah, I know you can do it." And I went, "No way! How could I do that?" and he goes, "Well, I've got this doctor and he's coming in to talk to you." And I went, "Uhhh." And, Leon knows this whole deal because this is Stanley's way of...

So this doctor comes in and he's this young guy. He's the guy in the movie. Some young doctor or internist from Moorefield's, this eye hospital in London. And it's a great hospital. Anyway, he comes in and he goes, "There's really no problem, Malcolm. We do delicate eye operations every day and we always use these lid locks." I said, "Really? Oh, okay."

Of course, what I didn't realize is that I'm sitting up looking at a video and most of the patients are lying flat on an operating table. So, when the fateful day came...you know I'm also in a, uh, straight jacket with straps and things on my head, and I've got to play the scene! I can only take it for 10 minutes, so it's 10 minutes, we do the take, it's over.

So he walks down just before the take and he says, "Um, Doc. Just say, 'How are you doing today little Alex.'" And then he walks back up. And you know, we were in front of the screen and he walks back up to where the cameras are about 35 feet away. So, the doctor's there going, "Oh, what's your name again?" and I go, "Doc! Who cares! Just say, 'How you doing?' Just get the drops in!" And I'm sitting there, tapping with my foot, how many seconds were going. I'm trying to play the scene and at one point I went, "Doc! Doc! Get the things!" So it was a bit like that. Eventually he did get the line out. We did get the scene, which went very well.

With all the so early on in your career? Is there a burden of being the main character in *A Clockwork*

Orange 30 physical consequences like this, what were the mental consequences of being linked to such an iconic character years later?

McDowell : No. No. Not really. Are you saying, would I have preferred not to have made the film?

Or not to do it so early in your career?

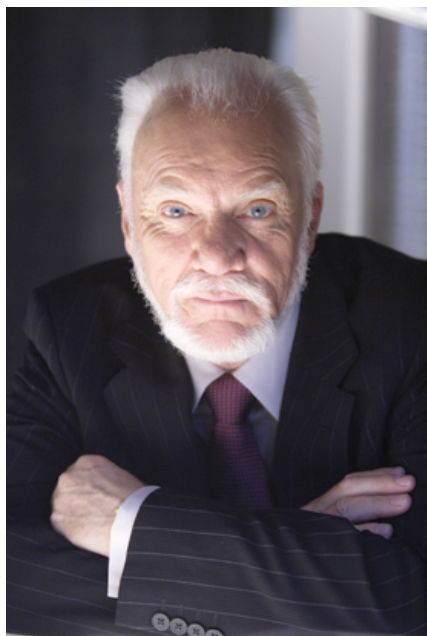


McDowell : But he was a young man. I couldn't have done it when I was 35. I would be playing the doctor. So, no. Listen, I came out of the traps, as they say, fast. You know, I started with *If* by Leslie Anderson...which, there is a thing called, *Never Apologize*, I don't know if anybody's seen it or got it...well, I was cast in *A Clockwork Orange* because of that performance. Basically I just met with Stanley to have a chat and he gave me the book and that was my audition, as far as I knew. There was no audition, that was it.

And Christiana, his widow, told me just a couple of years ago that he was watching *If* at the house, with a projector. So, when I came on and played my first scene, he said, "Re-lace it. I want to see that again." He did that five times. And then he turned to Christiana and said, "We've found our Alex." And I believe he had been looking for two or three years for somebody to do it. I mean, I didn't have a clue about this. So, he gave me the book to read, and I read it. Couldn't understand a word of it. When I first read it I thought it was mumbo-jumbo. You know, it's a hard book to read, always having to refer back to the glossary to find out what the hell these words mean.

You've talked about it being iconic. But did you realize, while you were making it, that it was going to be so polarizing and controversial? Did you sense that that was going to happen?

McDowell : No. No. No. As far as I was concerned, we'd made a wonderful black comedy. So when it came out, I was shocked and rather pissed that the audience didn't get the humor. But this is the difference between the audiences then and audiences now. Because if you see it with an audience now as I have done, I saw it a few years ago, the audiences are on every laugh that



I thought was funny. I thought I was making a black comedy, which I was! But the look and the message is so overwhelming and so...look, no movie had

looked like this before this movie. Nothing had looked like this. Now, everybody from Madonna to David Bowie copies it. And my god, they all wear the eyelash and the bowler, I mean how many times have I got to see that? And the codpiece.

And I'll tell you how that came along: the codpiece and the white and the bowler. I was over at [Kubrick's] house, you know, looking for stuff to do. And I didn't like anything there, really. They had a big box of hats, some with feathers. I thought that was pretty lame. So I say, "Look, I've got my Cricket gear in my car." So I went to the car and got my Cricket gear. And he says, "Oh yeah, I love the white." And so I put it on. And he goes, "Oh put the protector on the outside." And I went, "Great idea." So I wore the protector on the outside like a codpiece. He goes, "This could be like the middle ages. I like this look." And that's how the look of the Droogs came; because I had my Cricket stuff in the back of my car.

The eyelash is, I was walking through this store on Kensington Church Street and by the cash register there's one yard of eyelash. And I thought, "That's hilarious!" You know this was, mini-skirts up to here. You could see what every girl had for breakfast, you know. The fashions of Carnaby Street were hilarious. And then the yard of eyelash was such fun that I bought one for Stanley. And he goes, "Oh, that's great. Put it on." He took a photograph on one eye and then two eyes and I get a call the next day and he goes, "Oh my god. These shots of you with the eyelash are great. The one of you with just the one eyelash is great because you look at your face and you think there's something wrong and you're not quite sure what it is.

How did Kubrick explain the film when you first met?

McDowell : You'll be shocked; he didn't explain anything. Because he didn't know. I mean, to be honest with you. Stanley, you know, he was meticulous in many ways, but he wasn't good at explaining stuff. If he saw it he knew it, and if he didn't see it, he hadn't a clue what it was.

So, I remember saying once, "So, you got any ideas for this scene, Stanley." And he just looked at me and said, "You know Malc, that's what I hired you. I'm not a writer." And so I say, "Oh, that's interesting. Does anyone have a call sheet? Oh, look at this – Director: S. Kubrick. Hmm? How's about a bit of direction?" and it just made him laugh.



With most directors you'd say, "You have any ideas for this scene?" and you'd sit down and have a discussion for an hour and they'd come up with whatever. With Stanley? In a way he gave me the greatest gift of all, he just said, "Show me. Make it up. Do it!" So, I did.

"So with the *Singin' in the Rain* bit, is that how that came about? Because it was the only song you knew the words to? Is that a true story?

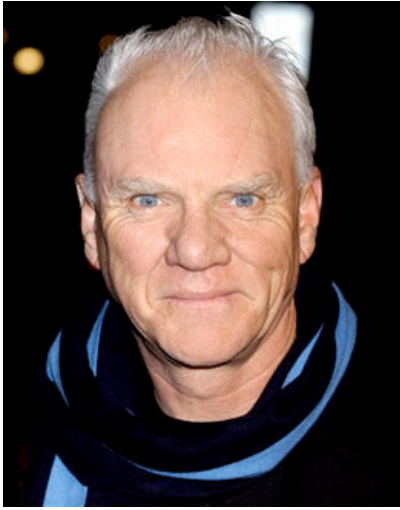
McDowell: It was the only one I knew sorta half the words to.

We'd been trying to figure out this scene for five days. The camera had not turned for five days. I mean, literally. We literally come off a high of doing the end of the movie, with the hospital bed and all this and the chains, and it's an incredible scene. We just nailed it. We just knew we had an incredible end. So there was this high and I was frankly exhausted. And so I was happy to let him figure it out for five days. I figure, I'm gonna take a back seat, let him get on with it.

So every morning there'd be a van and they'd change the furniture. Stanley just thought that maybe if he just changed the furniture, maybe some magic would happen. And of course, it didn't. and on the fifth day, and by this point I was getting really bored, he came up to me and just said, "Can you dance?" and I said, "Can I dance!"

Was it taking so long because it was just a standard fight scene no different from...?

McDowell : What was sort of written was very sparse because it 's really a very limited script. What was written was that the gang get their way into the house, kick the writer down some stairs, throw some bottles of booze through a window. That's it. And I'm like, "But that's so lame. We can't do that." And he knew it too.



When [Kubrick] was in trouble for an idea he'd get out the zoom lens. And I'd see the zoom lens going on the camera and I'd go, "Wow! So we don't have an idea in our heard do we!?" And he'd just laugh because he knew it was true.

But I'll tell you, it was wild. The very first shot in the movie, it's a track and a zoom. It's an incredible shot which he operated. So, we're sitting there all day just doing this shot. It's the key shot in the movie, we tell you everything in that shot. And it was the only set that was built. So, we shot the scene and three days later he comes up to me and he said, "I saw the shot. You didn't tell me that when you lifted the milk up, you kind of toasted the audience." I said, "Yeah..." he goes, "Well, why did you do that?" And I say, "Well, I was telling the audience, 'You're coming on one hell of a ride with us now.'" And he goes, "Oh, oh, oh. I didn't know that." And He was operating the camera!

You were talking about how modern audiences understand the film better. But with the legacy of the film, a lot of it seems to have influenced youth culture a lot. You have Rob Zombie, who you worked with, making a couple of [music videos](#) referencing it. And there's a famous punk band called The Adicts who come out dressed like the Droogs and play all of their shows like that.

McDowell : Yeah.

But it seems like most of it is an obsession with the first act of the film, you know, the ultra violence before he goes to prison. And I read this book when I was in high [school](#), my friends all passed it around. But it didn't seem like most people understood the second half of the book. And especially missing the last chapter in the film.

McDowell : The missing last chapter? Forget it. It's a rip off. It's literally, Anthony Burgess was asked to do it, really, told to do it by the publisher who said, "Look, this is going to make it very difficult if you don't make him acceptable." So he told me he just banged it out in two hours. So it's not the original story at all.

But what do you make that images and elements of the film, but not the whole meaning of the film, have been repeated in music videos and bands dressing up.



McDowell : But that's the way it is. Look, if they're copying the imagery from the futuristic beginning of the movie, that's fine! Because the message is there. I mean, I presume they didn't all get up and leave halfway through the movie. So the message is quite clear in the film: it's very political in many ways, social certainly, and futuristic? Well, it was futuristic. It's not anymore. But one could say that a year after it came out because everything that it said has come true in terms of: gangs, drugs, violence. I mean, in the book, nobody's on the street at night because they're all home watching TV. Hello! Just go downtown LA when there's an *American Idol* night. You don't see anybody on the street.

It's sort of, all of that is true. The great thing about Burgess's work is the dichotomy of making the hero or anti-hero an immoral man. And that's what makes it interesting. Because, you know, you are sucked into kind of like this guy

What's so brilliant about the book and the film is, what's worse? Is it worse to have Big Brother, the government, taking away our freedoms? I guess we're talking about communism now, or fascism, or whatever. So if you boil it down to one sentence, the movie is about the freedom of man to choose.

That's what the movie's about! The freedom of man to choose and they had taken his freedom away from him.

With Kubrick as a person, after such forming such a strong bond working on this movie, were you able to [keep in touch](#)?

McDowell : No. In a word, no. You see, in my naiveté as a young actor...all I know is that I'd done *If* with Lindsay and he became a great friend I mean a great friend. He was fantastic. We'd go to dinner, have Indian dinners in London. Just fantastic. You know, the best Indian food, right? And we'd just sit and argue and discuss films that we'd seen and it was an amazing and stimulating relationship and an intellectual one, as well as being a human one. But when I finished *A Clockwork Orange* I presumed that I would have the same relationship with Stanley that I'd had with him during the movie. But the fact was, he barely called me after that. I couldn't get him on the phone. He was always editing and I figured, "Well, you know, he's busy." But I really, I don't think I saw him more than a dozen times, or half a dozen times, after that.

Didn't Kubrick have a strange sense of humor? Like, didn't you have a fear of snakes and he put a snake in a scene?

McDowell : Well, who doesn't have a fear of snakes?

But didn't he put a snake in the movie just to kind of?



McDowell : No. there's a snake in the movie, just as my pet. And I went, "Well that's a...you know, Stan. Do I have to pick the damn thing up?" He goes, "Yeah." So, they put it in a drawer under my bed and I go to pick it up and I open the drawer and I went, "Snakes gone!" The whole crew leapt through the door! Wow, they disappeared! Stanley, Gone! Gone through that door! And I'm left there. That snake it had coiled itself under the bed. I mean, we're trying to pull the damn thing out. And even though it was a python or a boa constrictor – oh, Basil the Boa, yeah. You know, they're still quite nasty looking things. I'm not quite a great snake person myself. But I don't think he did it just to...because really, you know, hopefully, I'm a good enough actor to...

The one thing I am really scared of is black panthers. I had to do this *Cat People* and I had to do this shot where I'm nonchalantly just standing by this panther. And this thing, you know, was tethered to the neck but of course the paws could reach out and grab you and pull you in. and I'm supposed to just lounge around because I'm supposed to be half cat myself. And I'll tell you, that cat's over there and I'm sort of leaning like this. So, it looks so obvious in the film, it's just hilarious. So that's one thing I am scared of, but pythons, no. Or boa constrictors, no.

Can you talk about maybe one piece of direction that Kubrick gave you? Like in the murder scene when you smash the woman's head and you kind of look shocked for the first time and then there's that subliminal cut.

McDowell : Thank you, I'll take that. That's all acting! I'm supposed to look shocked and like I've really hurt someone and it's trying to show that, you know.

But did he give you...?



McDowell : No! Stanley does not direct actors! I'll tell you, a guy arrived, the doctor in the Ludovico sequence. He arrived in the morning with his coffee and his briefcase. Stanley comes up in a parka. It's freezing cold, London, you know: foggy, misty, cold, you see the breath, you know, the whole thing. And I say, "Hey Stan have you met" and he goes, "No, do you want to meet him?" And I go, "Yeah. We're doing the scene, why not?" So he walks up and he goes to the guy and he says, "Hi, how are you doing? Stanley Kubrick. Do you know your lines?" And the guy's still got his coffee, it's steaming and he goes, "Oh, eh, yes. I think so, Stanley." And goes, "Okay. Go." And I went, "Stanley, Stanley! Why don't we just let him go and finish his coffee. You know, we'll go in and enter the trailer and sit down and then we'll just rehearse

the scene. You know, the poor guy was just a basket case before he got on the set. This was Stanley.

Kubrick is known for doing many hundreds of takes, did you have to do that?

McDowell : No, he didn't do that. This is before the craziness really set in.

Vitali: Sort of.

McDowell : He doesn't...[Leon] got him when he was sort of really nuts on *Barry Lyndon*, that's when he really went fruitcake. This is when he wanted to be called Isaac, isn't it?

Vitali: Oh, he wanted to be called a lot of things. Isaac! He said to the first assistant, "Okay, from now on you call me Isaac." He went, "Isaac, what do you mean? Stanley, we got to do a shot today! This is now seven days and we haven't done a shot! He goes, "Call me Isaac." "Okay...Isaac!" He goes, "Yeah. Isaac Newton." Now, I kid you not, the same guy he tells me, he's walking down the corridor and sees Stanley's wife rushing the other way and she's screaming, "Oh God, now he's really lost it! He's calling himself Isaac!"

We heard about Malcolm's experience with Kubrick. You were a lot closer with him, I think. What different side of him did you see that was more human? Because his films are quite distant. Was he like that himself or was he much warmer?



Vitali: He could be anything depending on the moment.

And that's very much how he approached the work too. You know that thing about, when he walked on the set; he never knew how he was going to shoot the scene. So, as an actor, you know, he'd say, "Do what you're gonna do. So me what you're gonna do. But do it for real. Act it for real. Don't think of it as a rehearsal." Because, you know, a lot of people just like to walk through the scene or walk through the dialogue. He wanted it done for real. And while you were working it out for real, he'd be walking around with an Arriflex tube and he'd be putting different lenses on it and he'd be looking down, looking up, and walking around you. And it was when he found that right lens at that right distance and at that right height, that's when he knew he'd found a key in to the scene. You know, the emotional temperature, probably the pace of it, and that you were delivering something real. So you didn't walk on the set thinking, "Oh, we'll just trot through the lines." And I would say that working as an actor with Stanley; it was the closest to a film or television director who worked like a [theater] director. The rehearsal was so important. It was his lifeline to actually getting a start on the scene. And the rest of the shots would kind of fall in because of that first angle, that first lens that he'd found at that first distance and height.

Can you talk the difference between this new Blu-Ray transfer is compared to the previous DVD version? And I think it was released on Blu-Ray as well. What is different this time? What were you able to do? Kubrick was so meticulous; I suppose the word would be anal, about how these films were to be presented on the [home video](#) market too. How do you stay true to that, you know, what he would have wanted?

Vitali: Well, it was a really long process. You know, after he died we were working with Warner

Home Video and the DVD market had only just started at the end of the 90s. And so, you know, there was a lot of conversation and a lot of talk about how we were going to do this. But the first thing we had to do was go back to the original camera negative. So we went back to the original camera negative and we repaired where there were, because they used to punish negatives in the old days like you wouldn't believe. I mean, they were used for printing copies, straight forward copies that you would see in the cinema. So in the old days you've got a wonderful one-generation print. But you were hammering the negative to such an extent that there was frame damage and perf damage.

It's like those Goya prints that the government has run so many times.



Vitali: That's right, that's right. Exactly. Exactly that. And you know, sometimes it can be irreparable damage so you've got to go to another generation. So what we had to do was go to those original negatives and repair them. And then we made new inter-positives from which most video and DVD transfers were made from, it was an inter-positive. And then you have an inter-negative from that inter-positive, which were for theatrical prints. So, it was a frame-by-frame situation where you judge the color. And on the first DVD pass, what they did, basically, was take old VHS masters. And there were a lot of complaints about the quality. But they had to meet a deadline because, you know, on the back of *Eyes Wide Shut* it was decided that, Stanley and Warner's Home Video decided, well that's when we'll put out a Kubrick collection. And they'd advertised it and put the press out there. And Stanley dying was a big shock but they couldn't stop the process once it had started.

So, after we released *Eyes Wide Shut*. I came over here to work on the restorations and then we went into Warner Home Video and we worked on frame-by-frame transfer and it was all very painstaking and it took two years, really, to do all those films.

For a while there, there was this thing where Kubrick would only release the films for the home market in a full frame format. But eventually they came out in the wide screen. But why was he against doing them in the wide screen for the home video? Why were you guys allowed to do that after his death? And was that what he wanted?

Vitali: First of all, he shot simultaneously for widescreen, you know 1:85, apart from *2001*, let's put that aside because that was a Cinerama job and specifically shot that way. But the normal films, his other films. It was all shot 35 mill and 1:85 was, it used to be 1:66 in the very beginning with *Paths of Glory* you had full screen, you know. So, most films were made that way and shown that way and exhibited that way. But what he didn't want to do was to lose anything at the top and bottom of the picture. And that's what happens when you go 1:85 in the cinema. You got the width, but you're missing the top and the bottom. And Stanley composed his stuff with stuff going on in the top and the bottom. And what it also was, was that if you, on television, or on television screens, if you went 1:66, which was the original kind of widescreen format, or if you went 1:85, you were losing all that top and bottom, but you were losing all that width too. And I think, if you watched *Full Metal Jacket* in the theater and you had that full 1:85, the black mask, top and bottom, it's a very powerful film. Because you've got the peripheries going on. But if you watch it on television, it's still a very powerful film, just in a different way. Because you haven't got the width, but you've got the height. So it means that there's always something going on. So, instead of that feeling that something could be coming at you all the time that you get in the theater, you get the feeling that something could be coming at you from the top, from below, anywhere. And so that's why it was a different art form for him.



So when you say they later did it, I have to tell you that because of the size of TVs now and you get a 16:9, then there's, you know, that's why it was done. I had nothing to do with that decision. But it just meant that everything was like that, even for your normal television screens. So that is something that Stanley would have discussed before it was done. But it was done, so. But people have got both versions now. They've got full screen and they've got widescreen. So, you kind of killed two birds with one stone, I guess.

Can you talk a bit about Stanley as a person.

Vitali: He could be the kindest man on earth or he could be very, very mean. He could be very generous and then he could be a penny pinching, well, frankly, fool the next.

You mean against his own interest?

Vitali: Those things very often are against your own interest. If he'd lost his temper, if he'd really lost his temper, you know, it makes people very nervous. So people don't want to own up to an error or a mistake, or else they start to try to second guess him, which also causes a problem in its own right.

While everyone acknowledges the genius he was, there is also the accusation that he could be a bit indecisive at times. And that he couldn't really make up his mind. And even on a movie like *Eyes Wide Shut*, it took almost two years to make because he just wasn't sure what he wanted. So where do you think that came from?

Vitali: That came as much from bravery as from, because he trusted himself enough to go into a situation and not know how it was going to work out. So all those things you heard from Malcolm as an actor, and I can say the same things too, that was him saying, "I don't know how this is going to work." You didn't always know where the scene was going or how it was going to work out, but so long as he could get the best out of everybody, including the actors, and importantly from the actors, he could get something he could build on.



But does 70 takes get the best out of an actor?

Vitali: It wasn't always 70 takes. It was sometimes more. Believe me. But sometimes it was less; because on *Barry Lyndon* I was doing one take stuff and he was saying, "Great, set up. Great, set up. Great, set up." So it wasn't like, it became a mantra that he had to do 40 takes, or 20 takes, or 15 takes, or 100 takes. It wasn't like, "That's my principal and I have to do it." It was just that, by the time he was coming to the end of his career, I suppose...the end of his life, he knew that he was in a position to be able to do it.

Was there every any attempt on the Blu-Ray to put back some of this material?

Vitali: No, no, no, no, no. because, Stanley, once he'd made his decision. I can tell you right now

because i sent five days burning all the outtakes from *A Clockwork Orange*, *The Shining*, *Barry Lyndon*. We went to a special dump in London. And we took a big truck up to the, you know, confidential disposal area. He didn't want outtakes in his movies.

Are there any scenes that you would have liked to have saved?

Vitali: There was one scene that he cut short that I would have liked to restore the whole thing to, and that was in *The Shining*. When they're looking at the hotel for the first time and the elevator door opens and there's the manager and Jack and Shelly and Danny, alright. And they're walking along this long room which is the lounge area, and there are these big windows and they're that tall in the picture and the whole track just runs along like that. In the version you have, in the shorter version, which was the one released everywhere else except here, he cut it short. He cut it because it was a time thing. It was the whole of it. The dynamics of the new cut. But that shot for me was the best because without realizing it you're set up for something, which is, these tiny people in this huge place with this threat of danger coming from everywhere. And you'd never know where. These tiny people in this huge milieu, how are we going to handle it?



In *The Shining*, I've heard conflicting reports, but my understanding is that Steadicam was developed specifically for that film. Is that true? And how do you develop something like Steadicam?


Vitali: Because you have someone like Garret Brown, who is a genius in his own right, he truly, truly is. He wasn't the only person. A lot of people came to Stanley and said, "We're trying to do this." A lot of people, Arriflex used to go to Stanley, you know, the camera company, and say, "We want to do this." Or, "We're trying to do that, what do you think?" And they would take notice of what he said.

So he was actually involved in the development of it?


Vitali: He would make suggestions or say, you know, I know that when, you know, not DVD, but when they trying to find a medium between VHS and Laserdiscs, there were all these kind of interactive ideas. Phillips was one company that tried to do that. Phillips came and said, "What do you think?" And he said, "Well, I don't think it looks much different from VHS. So what's the point?" So they really didn't develop it any further than that. They realized that DVD was on the way, and Stanley supported DVD.

Before *The Shining* came out, *Rocky* had been able to use Steadicam for the scene running up the stairs. Did they have to get Kubrick's okay for that? Was he annoyed?

Vitali: No. that was Garret Brown's. And, actually, we were flying Garret from London where we were shooting to, I guess LA or New York where they were shooting *Rocky*, backwards and forwards. He was working on the two productions at the time.











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