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Stanley Kubrick DVD collection

(Price: \$79.92.) A Warner Home Video Directors Series release of "2001: A Space Odyssey" (1968), "A Clockwork Orange" (1971), "The Shining" (1980), "Full Metal Jacket" (1987), "Eyes Wide Shut" (1999), "Stanley Kubrick: A Life in Pictures" (2001). Release: Oct. 23.

By [JUSTIN CHANG](#)

Stop me if you've heard this one: Stanley Kubrick was a perfectionist and a control freak; a chess master and an intensely private individual. And, while making his peerlessly disturbing, endlessly influential movies, Kubrick insisted on doing take after take after take -- a truism that gets repeated so often throughout the extras here, you'd think the director himself were behind the camera, forcing his friends and collaborators to recount the story ad nauseam.

If this master filmmaker believed repetition yielded perfection, the documentaries on Warner's imposing 10-disc Directors Series collection have certainly taken his ethos to heart, trotting out the same gallery of talking heads -- directors Steven Spielberg and Sydney Pollack, longtime collaborators Jan Harlan and Milena Canonero, actor Jack Nicholson among many others -- to make and remake the same points, albeit tailored to the film under discussion.

The movies themselves, however ("2001: A Space Odyssey," "A Clockwork Orange," "The Shining," "Full Metal Jacket" and his final, posthumously completed opus, "Eyes Wide Shut") testify to a decisive lack of repetition across Kubrick's body of work -- a dogged refusal to make the same film twice, which would have been just as evident had Warner subbed in "Barry Lyndon," "Lolita" or "Dr. Strangelove: or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb." As Spielberg opines, "The only thing that bonded all his films was the incredible virtuoso that he was with craft," a fact made intimidatingly clear in every one of the titles in this splendid reissue.

Receiving the most lavish treatment is "2001: A Space Odyssey," which, nearly 40 years after its release, remains a gorgeous, towering enigma. Thesps Keir Dullea and Gary Lockwood do more talking on their commentary track than they did in their roles as astronauts, with Lockwood at times amusingly cantankerous

in his defense of the movie's genius ("Human beings are just too stupid to comprehend the beauty of what we have here") -- which, as was often the case with Kubrick, went unappreciated early on. Snippets from *Variety's* review ("Big, beautiful but plodding sci-fi epic") are held up for the viewer's incredulity.

Every Kubrick film tells its own illuminating behind-the-scenes story about its creator; with "2001," it's the director's obsession with not only pushing the visual-effects envelope, but also projecting a painstakingly accurate vision of scientific progress in the new millennium. Peeks at the film's trippy concept art bear this out, while extras have original novelist Arthur C. Clarke, Dullea and others speculating about why America's space program has never conquered the heights to which Kubrick's imagination aspired.

Greeted initially as dangerous underground dysto-porn, "A Clockwork Orange" allows everyone from helmers Mary Harron and Sam Mendes to intellectual Camille Paglia -- all of whom view Kubrick's chilling adaptation of the Anthony Burgess novel as an indelible cultural touchstone -- to intelligently hold forth on issues of censorship, sexuality and representations of violence raised by this landmark film. Indeed, when a rash of seemingly "Clockwork"-inspired crimes caused the Brooklyn-born, longtime Blighty resident Kubrick to fear for his and his family's lives, he persuaded Warner Bros. to remove the film from British cinemas, wielding the sort of directorial power hard to imagine today.

Prominently featured in the "Clockwork" extras, Malcolm McDowell (delivering his most famous and still most frightening performance as Alex the Droog) peppers the commentary track with naughty wit ("People think I'm masturbating here; bullshit, I'm taking off my boots") and relishes the famous story of how Kubrick got him to croon "Singin' in the Rain" during the central rape sequence. McDowell also gets loving enshrinement in "O Lucky Malcolm!," a docu survey of his career titled after 1973's "O Lucky Man!," his second collaboration with director Lindsay Anderson (after 1968's "If ...").

The package's three remaining titles haven't been accorded the same high critical estimation and lasting cultural import as "2001" and "Clockwork," and the bonus features are conspicuously thinner.

Yet "The Shining," if not exactly a definitive treatment of Stephen King's novel, remains an impeccable exercise in the film craft Spielberg so reveres, an object lesson in how Steadicam and sound design can conjure an atmosphere of icy menace. And 1987's underrated "Full Metal Jacket" -- a late-blooming Vietnam War movie that "Platoon" fans simply didn't know what to make of -- still packs a punch with its brilliantly sustained boot-camp sequence; commentators Vincent D'Onofrio and R. Lee Ermey, who have Kubrick to thank for their careers, can't help but marvel at, yup, the number of takes (37) the director required for the jelly-doughnut scene alone.

And then there's "Eyes Wide Shut." Met with befuddled disappointment by audiences expecting a Tom Cruise-Nicole Kidman sex tape rather than a brooding, mysteriously anti-erotic odyssey through a dreamlike Manhattan, Kubrick's posthumously completed 1999 opus is ripe for re-evaluation. Alas, no fresh interviews are forthcoming; instead, the discs are largely devoted to eulogies for the late director and a look at his two sadly abandoned projects, devoted to Napoleon and the Holocaust, respectively. No less than the films in this collection, these extras underscore that time has not diminished the loss of this great filmmaker.

Rounding out the package is the warm and insightful documentary "Stanley Kubrick: A Life in Pictures," which includes such treasurable footage as Kubrick grumpily directing his daughters in a black-and-white homemovie.

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