



FULL METAL JACKET

STANLEY KUBRICK'S
NEW FILM

Stanley Kubrick, the reclusive and brooding visionary film maker has finished his twelfth film since *Fear and Desire* in 1953. He wrote, produced and directed his latest film **Full Metal Jacket** in England. In England you say? Isn't this the movie about the Vietnam war, based on the novel *The Short-Timers* by Gustav Hasford, in which the author recounts his days of service as a Vietnam marine from 1967 to 1968?

Yes, it is. So how does a film maker create Vietnam in England of all places? To answer this, one must understand the unusual qualities which make Kubrick the extraordinary presence he is among the world's leading film makers.

Since Kubrick ran into difficulties with the old Production Code (Censor Board) in Hollywood over *Lolita* in 1962 (which he then filmed in England) he has preferred to live and work in the United Kingdom. He has lived there ever since, seldom returning to the United States because he will not fly and dislikes all forms of travel.

He lives in a heavily-guarded mansion outside London and expects everyone to respect his privacy and secret way of life. Inside his home he has brought the world to him. He has installed every conceivable piece of electronic and communications equipment through which he is in instant

contact with anyone around the world at anytime. In this way he knows every cinema in which his films are playing, knows exactly how much they earn and receives copies of every review and story written about them, no matter where they are playing. It is said that critiques and articles in languages other than English are translated for him. Kubrick is thus totally independent; aloof, withdrawn, yet fully aware of what's going on in the way of film and the world at large.

It is doubtful that many directors have the complete freedom accorded Stanley Kubrick. Only David Lean and Woody Allen come to mind. Warner Bros. studio, which has financed Kubrick's last three films, *A Clockwork Orange*, *Barry Lyndon* and *The Shining*, leaves him entirely alone. It sees nothing until the film is finished. **Full Metal Jacket** is the first of a new three-picture agreement Kubrick has signed with Warners.

An example of how Kubrick never ventures away from home or meets people who are not essential to the making of his films is seen in the way he conducted "a nationwide search for new faces" to play the young marines who are the main characters in his film. Other film makers would have travelled to major cities, creating enormous publicity along the way. Kubrick stayed at home. All applicants were asked to send a video tape audition to Warners in London and were issued a set of ten instructions to

follow, including "wear a T-shirt and pants."

At home, Kubrick went through hundreds of tapes and from them chose Adam Baldwin and Dorian Harewood. For the leading role of Private Joker he decided to use Matthew Modine (*Birdy*, *Mrs. Soffel*). The only statement that Kubrick has made about his film is that it follows an "18-year old Marine recruit from carnage and machismo initiation rites at a Marine Corp training base to his climactic involvement in the fighting at Hue during the Tet offensive." Michael Herr (who wrote *Dispatches* and the narration for Coppola's Vietnam film *Apocalypse Now*) wrote the screenplay with Kubrick.

To return to the question of Vietnam in London. Kubrick is a master at using all the latest technical advances in film making. Moviegoers will never forget the opening scenes of *2001: A Space Odyssey* with the apes and primitive people, all of which were filmed in a studio with a revolutionary new front-screen process.

All we know about **Full Metal Jacket** is that Kubrick found an abandoned gasworks in Beckton, southeast London and transformed it, together with camera magic and second unit location shooting, into the far away Asian land. He later used a flexible new computer editing system, the Montage Picture Processor, to carry out some remarkable editing effects.

The acclaimed novel by former

reporter, Gustav Hasford, begins at "boot" camp, then shows a succession of gruesome, explicitly violent events which reach surreal proportions. Comparisons with *Platoon* will be inevitable.

Filming began in the autumn of 1984. Kubrick uses many technicians and associates who have worked with him previously but this time he deeply missed his cinematographer, John Alcott, who passed away. He had photographed Kubrick's *Clockwork Orange*, *Barry Lyndon* and *The Shining*. Douglas Millsome took his place. The production designer was Anton Furst, remembered for his startling effects in *Company of Wolves*.

Kubrick has been called a pedantic, meticulous film maker who takes years to prepare a single film. He stages every scene and plans every step and shot with the utmost care. He places the greatest importance on every image to be captured by the camera. Throughout his early films, he followed a strong narrative line in *Killer's Kiss*, *The Killing*, *Paths of Glory*, *Spartacus* and his most famous film, *Dr. Strangelove*. But from then on narrative flow seems less important to him than personal vision and a brilliant visual style. All of this will be fully apparent to moviegoers who look to this film maker for a profound expression of distrust in today's political and social system

— Gerald Pratley

