

# 2001- ASpace Odyssey

by John Simpson

Possibly there has never been a film at once so praised and so vehemently castigated as Kubrick's epic. It was called both 'staggering' and 'dull', 'the first truly religious movie' and a 'shaggy God story'.

It is inevitable that as magnificent an achievement as 'Odyssey' should cause some sort of critical backlash, after all, panning a masterpiece certainly attracts attention. What some critics have complained about is that Kubrick does not express a specific idea, that producing some kind of aesthetic thrill, as 'Odyssey' undoubtedly does, is only a secondary objective in art.

The word *idea* itself is far too limiting for the type of message 'Odyssey' is conveying. As Kubrick himself says, it's not a message he ever intended to convey in words.

I think that most of the criticism on the film has missed the point in some small way or other. For example, it has been suggested that the film is Nietzschean. Of course Bowman and Poole are as near to the Superman as it is possible to get. And the film does deal with the evolution of man from ape to superman. And certainly, women play no important part in the film. But I think it is impossible to pin the film down as Nietzschean or as anything else. In fact I think that Kubrick used the Richard Strauss composition 'Also Sprach Zarathustra' deliber-

ately to mislead critics. Odyssey eludes interpretation by any philosophy as earthbound as Nietzsches.

As for the much criticized, 'unbelievable', 'ridiculous' psychedelic sequence, isn't the theme here that the mysterious barrier between mind and matter, which has been troubling philosophers for years, has been shattered? Look at the close-ups of Bowman's dazzled eyeball, of those foetal-looking structures, and especially of that lurid-looking glutinous red blob which appears near the end of the sequence, part of which looks definitely sexual and the rest very much like the inner ear, centre of man's aural perception and more important, his balance.

There is no distinction between reality and what Bowman perceives. I mean, none of this is really happening by human standards of reality. Of course there are no Regency bedrooms on Jupiter. But at the end of that sequence, Bowman has changed into something other than human. This isn't really such a disaster per se, though Kubrick doesn't tell us. It is not a film to be intellectually categorized.

As for what Sarris said in the *Village Voice* about it being 'sexless, soulless... antihuman... a dirge for the future', doesn't he realize that the movie makes some intellectual demands, that it is a jumping-off point for one's own mind? This type of criticism tells us more about the reviewer than the film.

By Steven Jovanovitch

Aside from some distracting arty film techniques, *High*, a film by Larry Kent provides an interesting and entertaining evening.

The film's leading couple was composed of Lanny Beckman as Tom and Astri Thorvik as Vicky. Both of these artists are unknown to me. The movie was filmed in the village and downtown sections of Montreal and Toronto. And Tom and Vicky carry on Bonnie and Clyde type activities in hippie surroundings.

When the story opens, Tom, who looks about twenty-four, is seducing a woman much older than himself, complete with sagging breasts and buttocks. From there, he goes to the classic hippie pad complete with all the classic hippie accoutrements; mattresses on the floor, with about six or seven people sleeping or indulging in other activities in the semi-nude, and of course a couple of squealing bastards. Tom has gone there for a sleep. One make later, and he's at the library meeting Vicky (the librarian). He makes a date for a theatre party and their love affair is on the way.

The filming of the theatre party is Larry Kent's initial distracting arty film technique. The majority of the film is in black and white. For the party sequence Kent switches to colour and very rapid action—so rapid as to be incomprehensible. Watching the party sequence is like running your eyes over a colourful collage and never comprehending what each

# HIGH

picture signifies. Consequently I gave up and the whole party sequence was a painful bore.

Another effect Kent uses is unicolour during a pot smoking sequence. Although unicolour was vaguely appropriate to depict a marijuana high, there was too much of it. This injudicious use of unicolour detracted from the film.

One other device for which I can offer no explanation is a strobe effect which was implemented every now and again for no apparent reason. I guess that's what makes an art film.

Now, back to the story. Tom moves in with Vicky the librarian and Vicky quits her job. Incidentally, Tom never was employed. He's a second year college drop-out. A profound social question concerning education is raised. Vicky says, "You've got two years of college. Why don't you do something



A High broad

with it?" Tom replies, "I did, I quit."

In order to support themselves, Tom pushes, rolls homosexuals, and robs the drunks that Vicky picks up. For their final fiasco Vicky agrees to spend a weekend with a rich member of the establishment, and Tom, introduced to the sucker as a friend, is just along for the ride. Now the story gets pretty serious. Vicky kills the sucker and she and Tom make love in the field beside his body. They take the man's money and his new... Thunderbird. Finally Vicky steals the Thunderbird from Tom and splits while he's in the john at a restaurant. And that's it.

It seems to me that throughout the entire movie Vicky is doing all the bitching about lack of money. She always ends up with clothes and jewels and finally, the car. If Kent is trying to say anything about female avarice, he certainly succeeded.

I hesitate to look for any overwhelming social revelations in this movie. It is definitely frivolous and anti-establishment in tone. A few topical allusions are made to the pill. Abortions, mentioned a few times, are treated very casually as a necessity.

The acting never transcends the mediocre, but then it is mainly the subject matter that keeps this movie going.

The title *High*, bears little relation to the subject matter. A few pot smoking scenes are as high as it gets unless Kent feels his arty photography is going to do the trick.

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