

# RECOVERED TREASURES: GREAT FILMS FROM WORLD ARCHIVES

January 15–February 20, 2011

## ***2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY***

Saturday, January 15, 4:00 p.m.

1968, 139 mins.

**This newly restored 70mm print from Warner Bros. is presented courtesy of the TIFF Bell Lightbox**

Directed by Stanley Kubrick. Written by Kubrick and Arthur C. Clarke. Produced by Kubrick and Victor Lyndon. Photographed by Geoffrey Unsworth. Music by Aram Khachaturian, Johann Strauss, Jr, Richard Strauss, and Gyorgi Ligeti. Edited by Roy Lovejoy. Production design by Tony Masters, Harry Lange, and Ernie Archer. Principal cast: Keir Dullea (as David Bowman), Gary Lockwood (Frank Poole), William Sylvester (Dr. Haywood Floyd), Daniel Richter (Moonwatcher), and Douglas Rain (Voice of Hal 9000).

NOTE: A newly commissioned article by Jonathan Rosenbaum about *Play Time* and *2001: A Space Odyssey*, the opening double feature in the *Museum of the Moving Image's* new theater, is available online at *Moving Image Source* ([movingimagesource.us](http://movingimagesource.us)).

Excerpt from an interview with Stanley Kubrick by Eric Norden in *Playboy* (September 1968):

*...One critic even called 2001 "the first Nietzschean film," contending that its essential theme is Nietzsche's concept of man's evolution from ape to human to superman. What was the metaphysical message of 2001?*

It's not a message that I ever intended to convey in words. *2001* is nonverbal experience; out of two hours and nineteen minutes of film, there are only a little less than forty minutes of dialog. I tried to create a visual experience, one that bypasses

verbalized pigeonholing and directly penetrates the subconscious with an emotional and philosophic content. To convolute McLuhan, in *2001* the message is the medium. I intended the film to be an intensely subjective experience that reaches the viewer at an inner level of consciousness, just as music does; to "explain" a Beethoven symphony would be to emasculate it by erecting an artificial barrier between conception and appreciation. You're free to speculate as you wish about the philosophical and allegorical meaning of the film—and such speculation is one indication that it has succeeded in gripping the audience at a deep level—but I don't want to spell out a verbal road map for *2001* that every viewer will feel obligated to pursue or else fear he's missed the point. I think that if *2001* succeeds at all, it is in reaching a wide spectrum of people who would not often give a thought to man's destiny, his role in the cosmos and his relationship to higher forms of life. But even in the case of someone who is highly intelligent,

certain ideas found in *2001* would, if presented as abstractions, fall rather lifelessly and be automatically assigned to pat intellectual categories; experienced in a moving visual and emotional context, however, they can resonate within the deepest fibers of one's being.

*Arthur C. Clarke has said of the film, "If anyone understands it on the first viewing, we've failed in our intention." Why should the viewer have to see the film twice to get its message?*

I don't agree with that statement of Arthur's, and I believe he made it facetiously. The very nature of the visual experience in *2001* is to give the viewer an instantaneous, visceral reaction that does not—and should not—require further amplification. Just speaking generally, however, I would say that there are elements in any good film that would increase the viewer's interest and appreciation on a second viewing; the momentum of a movie often prevents every stimulating detail or nuance from having a full impact the first time it's seen. The whole idea that a movie should be seen only once is an extension of our traditional conception of the film as an ephemeral entertainment rather than as a visual work of art. We don't believe that that we should hear a great piece of music only once, or see a great painting once, or even read a great book just once. But the film has until recent years been exempted from the category of art—a situation I'm glad is finally changing.

*Do you believe that machines are becoming more like men and men more like machines—and do you detect an eventual struggle for dominance between the two?*

First of all, I'm not hostile toward machines at all; just the opposite, in fact. There's no doubt that we're entering a mechanarchy, however, and that

our already complex relationship with our machinery will become even more complex as the machines become more and more intelligent. Eventually, we will have to share this planet with machines whose intelligence and abilities far surpass our own. But the interrelationship—if intelligently managed by man—could have an immeasurably enriching effect on society. *If life is purposeless, do you feel that it's worth living?*

Yes, for those of us who manage somehow to cope with our mortality. The very meaninglessness of life forces man to create his own meaning. Children, of course, begin life with an untarnished sense of wonder, a capacity to experience total joy at something as simple as the greenness of a leaf; but as they grow older, the awareness of death and decay begins to impinge on their consciousness and subtly erode their joie de vivre, their idealism—and their assumption of immortality. As a child matures, he sees death and pain everywhere about him, and begins to lose faith in faith and in the ultimate goodness of man. But if he's reasonably strong—and lucky—he can emerge from this twilight of the soul into a rebirth of life's élan. Both because of and in spite of his awareness of the meaninglessness of life, he can forge a fresh sense of purpose and affirmation. He may not recapture the same pure sense of wonder he was born with, but he can shape something far more enduring and sustaining. The most terrifying fact about the universe is not that it is hostile but that it is indifferent; but if we can come to terms with this indifference and accept the challenges of life within the boundaries of death—however mutable man may be able to make them—our existence as a species can have genuine meaning and fulfillment. However vast the darkness, we must supply our own light.

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