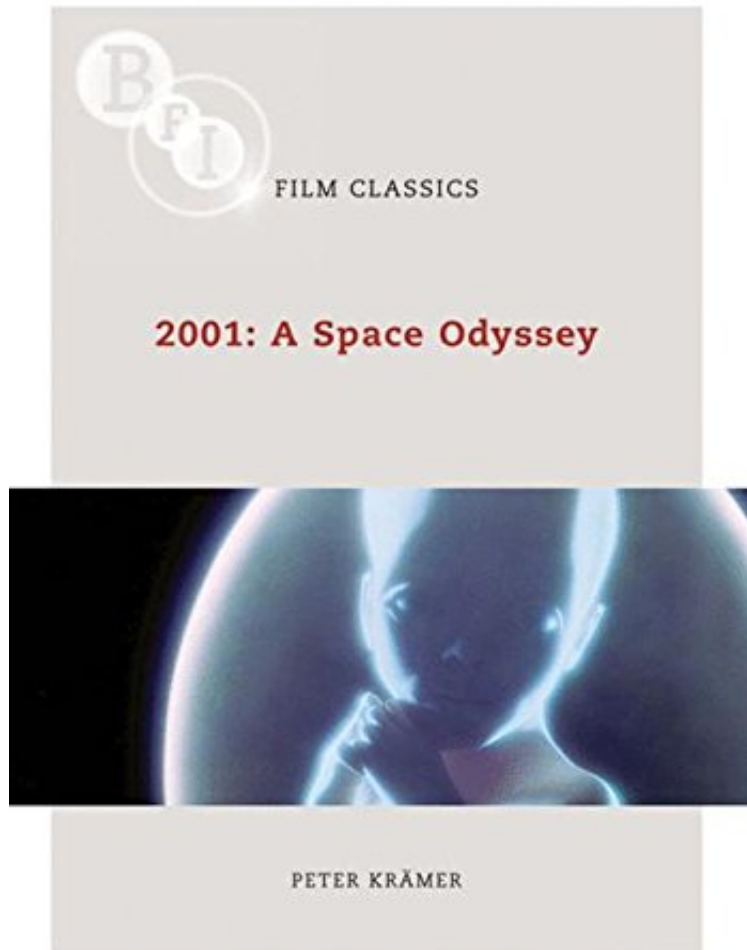


(Online library) 2001: A Space Odyssey (BFI Film Classics)

2001: A Space Odyssey (BFI Film Classics)

Peter Kramer

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Peter Kramer : 2001: A Space Odyssey (BFI Film Classics) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised 2001: A Space Odyssey (BFI Film Classics):

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Pleasant SurpriseBy Bob KonGreat book, and a pleasant surprise. New publications about "2001" are rare and this one is now up there as one of my favorites(and I've pretty much read them all). It reads well, is not egg headed and he doesn't ramble or show everyone how smart he is. He does a great job with a new book on what can be an overly hashed subject. Definitely recommended.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy CustomerOne of the best explanation about this classic movie that you will ever read.21 of 25 people found the following review helpful. Good as a PrimerBy Richard MasloskiI have several of the BFI

books that analyze a wide assortment of film classics - and after getting the book and reading it I always want to kick myself. Because even though the books are beautifully produced and filled with great illustrations, the actual insights into the films are usually very shallow and pedestrian in their accounting of the film's history from inception to reception to its place in the cultural landscape. But...I suppose that is what the series aim is, to simply introduce a film to a curious reader. And if that is the primary goal and reason for being of the BFI series' existence, then I can't complain. I should just lower my expectations with regards to insight and analysis - such as in this, Peter Kramer's take on the masterpiece 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY. Mr. Kramer does his duty and lays out the film from start to finish, with many pages wasted on pure synopsis. He discusses the film's cultural impact on the future of cinema and...that's about all, folks. And, yes, the pictures are nice and clear and lovely to look at. I want to read something I don't know. I want an insight I never thought of on my own. I long for a depth of keen insight into the sources and influences of a film. The obvious ones are dutifully covered herein: we learn that the movie was influenced by Arthur C. Clarke's story "The Sentinel" and his novel "Childhood's End" and so forth. We read the oft-recounted history of the collaboration of Kubrick and Clarke and how the novel became the literary voice for the silenced voice-overs that were to originally accompany the film...until Kubrick so wisely cut the narration so as to further his film as a mysterious, primarily visual work; as an abstract, intentionally arty motion picture. And...it is, without a doubt, a masterpiece. It is Kubrick's best film, hands down. No movie ever opened my eyes and mind to the Universe as THE place wherein we all lived - and died - and evolved... as did this epic film. I believe it was Fellini who wrote to Kubrick praising him for letting him dream with his eyes open. (This anecdote is not in the BFI book, though it should have been. Just as more should have been explored in the musical score controversy and the voice change for Hal from the original Martin Balsam - Arbogast from "Psycho.") Okay, so what am I getting at? Insight from left field, the unexpected tidbit, the brand new analysis! An example: I've never read of the close similarity of the beginning of the TV series "Twilight Zone" wherein we are faced with the twinkling stars of the universe and a rectangle floats towards us - looking for all the world like the monolith in the film under discussion - and as it turns we realize it is a door. It is the door to the Twilight Zone. And isn't the monolith also Bowman's door to the Twilight Zone of the the last parts of the movie? Kubrick watched and absorbed EVERYTHING. I can't prove it - but it seems that however consciously or subconsciously, the TZ beginning had some influence on the monolith and its being a doorway into the Twilight Zone of "2001." Food for thought. One other thought that I've not seen addressed and that is the close similarity of the end of "2001" to the ending of what has been widely acknowledged as the greatest film ever made, yes, "Citizen Kane." Of course Kubrick saw it. When and where I do not know - but he saw it, absorbed it, and however subliminally it touched him, I contend that the closing scenes of "2001" are a conscious or unconscious homage to the greatness of "Kane." "Kane" begins with the grand old man on his deathbed, looking not unlike the aged Bowman in his own deathbed in the TZ of Kubrick's film. He becomes a large foetus in a perfect, transparent circle - not unlike the glass ball winter scene that Kane holds just before he dies. In the end sequence of "2001" the camera moves in onto the monolith at the foot of Bowman's deathbed and as we enter its blackness - its continued mystery - we are suddenly transported to the exterior - in this case, the Universe. In "Kane" the camera moves in on the "mystery" of Rosebud (which is a roughly rectangular shape) and suddenly in one cut we are - as in "2001" - thrust outside of Xanadu with a view of the smoking chimney against the night sky of the Universe. The camera follows the chimney smoke upwards as it rises into the night sky and fades away, whereas in "2001" the camera lowers its field of vision to include both the Earth and the Starchild, reversing the effect of the former film. The last shot of "2001" has the Starchild turn and face us just as the screen turns to black. The Mystery of the Starchild is what we are left with. In "Kane" the closing shot is of the NO TRESPASSING sign on the gate of Xanadu...which also leaves the viewer with the uneasy sense of a Mystery that has not been solved, questions that have not been answered. The fact that both sequences are accompanied by vaguely similar musical crescendos - "2001"s by Richard Strauss and "Kane"s by Bernard Herrmann - is also a point to be noticed. And after both films end - stunning us in vastly different but equally vastly similar ways - both movies feature their end credits with exuberant and uplifting music cues that, in themselves, add to our sense of Wow - what have we just seen??? Am I reading too much into things? Can I prove my belief that everything influences everything else? Welles was a giant that Kubrick may have felt the directorial need to topple. Was "Kane" in his head when he conceived the closing shots of "2001"? We may never know. But...it is food for thought. And, back to Peter Kramer's book - or most of the BFI books - I yearn for 'food for thought.' But the BFI series invariably leaves me hungry. The name eludes me, but a famous artist was once asked what it was he wanted from a work of art and he said "Astonish me." Something like that. Well, when I read film criticism or analysis I look to be astonished. Anyway, while this book did not astonish me (and I realize that was probably never its intent), "2001" will continue to astonish me, as will "Kane". So did Welles influence Kubrick in "2001"? Did the title sequence of "Twilight Zone" influence Kubrick? Again, we may never know - but it is exciting to speculate. ADDENDUM: I also think that Bowman's accidentally knocking over the wine glass in the closing sequence of "2001" - the crashing glass - is a nod, conscious or unconscious, to the beginning breakage of the glass ball in "Kane." Just more speculation...but who knows?

Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey (1968) is widely regarded as one of the best films ever made. It has been

celebrated for its beauty and mystery, its realistic depiction of space travel and dazzling display of visual effects, the breathtaking scope of its story, which reaches across millions of years, and the thought-provoking depth of its meditation on evolution, technology and humanity's encounters with the unknown. 2001 has been described as the most expensive avant-garde movie ever made and as a psychedelic trip, a unique expression of the spirit of the 1960s and as a timeless masterpiece. Peter Krmer's insightful study explores the complex origins of the film, the unique shape it took and the extraordinary impact it made on contemporary audiences. Drawing on new research in the Stanley Kubrick Archive at the University of the Arts London, Krmer challenges many of the widely-held assumptions about the film. He argues that 2001 was Kubrick's attempt to counter the deep pessimism of his previous film, *Dr Strangelove* (1964), which culminates in the explosion of a nuclear 'doomsday' device, with a more hopeful vision of humanity's future, facilitated by the intervention of mysterious extra-terrestrial artifacts. This study traces the project's development from the first letter Kubrick wrote to his future collaborator Arthur C. Clarke in March 1964 all the way to the dramatic changes Kubrick made to the film shortly before its release by MGM in April 1968. Krmer shows that, despite or, perhaps, because of Kubrick's daring last-minute decision to turn the film itself into a mysterious artifact, 2001 was an instant success with both critics and general audiences, and has exerted enormous influence over Hollywood's output of science fiction movies ever since. The book argues that 2001 invites us to enjoy and contemplate its sounds and images over and over again, and, if we are so inclined, to take away from it an important message of hope.

'In this excellent addition to the BFI's Film Classics series, Kramer lovingly explores the genesis of both film and novel, as well as the film's reception and cultural impact.' - *The Guardian* '...this volume skilfully condenses four decades of cinema studies, academic insights and retrospective analyses...a worthwhile addition to the growing library of informed texts about 2001, Kramer's book captures something of Kubrick's vaulting ambitions, and Clarke's impeccable mastery of SF modes...' - *The Zone* 'Chapter six contains the best narrative description of 2001 I've ever read' - Anthony Frewin in *Sight Sound* 'The inclusion of recently released archive material by itself constitutes a significant addition to the body of writing on the Kubrick oeuvre. And while the film itself remains (to my mind) frustratingly ambiguous, Kramer's account of its creation and his interpretation provide a useful introduction for viewers and students coming to the film for the first time.' - Sheamus Sweeney, *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*

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