



Eyes Wide Open: A Memoir of Stanley Kubrick

By Frederic Raphael

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We've all heard the rumors.

He was a hermit. He refused to fly and wouldn't be driven at more than thirty miles an hour. He avoided having his picture taken and was terrified of being assassinated. As a filmmaker, he was obsessed with perfection. He insisted on total control of every facet of the process. Simple scenes required one hundred takes. No wonder he made only six movies in the past thirty-five years.

But what was he really like?

For more than two years, Frederic Raphael collaborated closely with Stanley Kubrick on the screenplay of what was to be the director's final movie, *Eyes Wide Shut*. Over time, as his professional caution was replaced by a certain affection, Kubrick lowered his guard for Raphael as he never had with journalists or biographers, to reveal much about his early life in the cinema and of the reverses and humiliations he had to endure. They spoke for hours about a variety of subjects, from Julius Caesar to the Holocaust, from Kubrick's views about other directors to reminiscences of the many stars with whom both men had worked (or nearly worked)--Kirk Douglas, Audrey Hepburn, James Mason, Peter Sellers, Marisa Berenson, Sterling Hayden, Marlon Brando, and Gregory Peck.

Here, with his own distinctly cinematic style, Raphael chronicles their often fiery exchanges, capturing Kubrick's voice as no one else could. Disdaining false veneration, he opens our eyes to the mind and art of a truly complex and hitherto elusive twentieth-century genius.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Hurriedly published to coincide with the July 1999 release of Stanley Kubrick's final film, *Eyes Wide Shut*, this slim, rather obviously titled volume by the film's distinguished screenwriter offers considerably less than its cover copy leads you to expect. But for avid followers of Kubrick's career, even a cursory glimpse of the late director's lifestyle and creative methods will prove to be fascinating. And while Frederic Raphael instantly drew criticism and controversy from Kubrick's family and friends for describing Kubrick as "the sedentary wandering Jew, rootlessly rooted within his own defenses," this and other remarks must be considered in context. *Eyes Wide Open* must ultimately be seen to reflect Raphael's conflicting emotions about a filmmaker he clearly admires and respects, even if their collaboration resulted in equal parts elation, exasperation, and hard-won rewards.

Using notebook entries, vivid recollection, and re-created scenes in screenplay format, Raphael paints a portrait as revealing of himself (if not more so) than of Kubrick, and neither man comes across without blemish. Simultaneously self-indulgent, frustrating, and fascinating in its attempt to probe Kubrick's closely guarded psyche (a mission Raphael ultimately fails to accomplish), the book finally reveals--in fragments of sensitive insight--that Kubrick's reputation as a reclusive genius did in fact hide a very complex, intensely intelligent, and surprisingly *human* being. In one passage Raphael observes that "Stanley was so determined to be aloof and unfeeling that my heart went out to him. Somewhere along the line he was still the kid in the playground who had been no one's first choice to play with." Whether such observations are an accurate representation of Kubrick's personality is beside the point; that Raphael made the observation speaks volumes of both men, and this book is filled with similar revelations.

In addition to offering a privileged look at Kubrick's collaborative process, the book also reveals elusive details about Kubrick the man--pet lover, intellectual challenger, gracious host--and the result is a warmer image of him than that afforded by decades of distant speculation by journalists too willing to perpetuate the "myth" of Kubrick as omnipotent genius. If Raphael's book invites criticism and charges of blatant opportunism (with Kubrick unable to defend himself), it also provides a rare and often fascinating look at an artist who constantly eluded the gaze of outsiders. Raphael takes us inside Kubrick's gated domain, and we're grateful for the visit. If the truth resides somewhere between the protest of Kubrick's family and the insights presented here, we can at least use this book as a guide through previously uncharted territory. --Jeff Shannon

From the Inside Flap

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About the Author

The American-born, British-educated writer Frederic Raphael is the author of nineteen novels and four short story collections, including *Richard's Things*, *The Glittering Prizes*, *Oxbridge Blues*, and most recently *Coast to Coast*, as well as the original screenplays for John Schlesinger's *Darling*, for which he won an Academy Award, and Stanley Donen's *Two for the Road*. He has adapted for the screen the works of Thomas Hardy (*Far from the Madding Crowd*), Iris Murdoch (*A Severed Head*), Henry James (*Daisy Miller*) and Arthur Schnitzler (*Traumnovelle*, filmed as *Eyes Wide Shut*). He is married with three children and divides his time between France and England.

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