

Arthur C. Clark's science fiction classic, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, is a brilliantly inventive novel with an intriguing plot that has left many scrambling to explain his vision in terms we can rationally understand. Given the enigmatic nature of Clark's work, Stanley Kubrick certainly had his work cut out for him when he chose to transform Clark's vision into a full-length cinema masterpiece.

Kubrick, using a wonderful musical score, excellent costumes and sets, and a revolutionary bag of special effects tricks, was highly successful in crafting this film into something to be enjoyed for generations to come.

The soundtrack alone is worthy of the fame the film has realized. Almost ironically, none of the music was written specifically for the movie but is instead a collection of pre-existing classical pieces Kubrick carefully selected to fit the direction of the film.

Though most science fiction movies rely on more modern—often electronic—scores, Kubrick's choice of a classical approach gives this film a more emotional, somewhat grown-up, appeal.

The opening track, for example, is so powerful and makes such a bold statement, that the piece, known as *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, is known quite well even to those who've never seen the movie.

Given that the music was inked many years before the movie was even planned, it was up to Kubrick to make the film and music fit well together. In the opening scene, a beautiful sequence of the sun rising over the earth as viewed from space unfolds to *Also Sprach Zarathustra*. The music begins slowly and quietly and builds dynamically over the course of the intro. A brassy horn, perhaps a trombone and a trumpet, carry the

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melody. A very deep bass drum accompanies the horns and provides the rhythm that ushers in the rising sun.

The movie's first space scene could easily be termed a space ballet. Images of spaceships, planets, and weightless travelers flow brilliantly into a backdrop of deep space to the hauntingly beautiful tune of *Blue Danube*. This gives an atypically fresh perspective on space travel as compared to most attempts in other sci-fi movies.

Blue Danube, like *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, is an exceptionally pleasant piece of music that does well to stand on its own merits. Fortunately Kubrick craftily joined the music to his film in a way that doesn't detract from the quality of the piece itself. While watching the eye candy dance across the screen, Johann Strauss' *Blue Danube's* delicate string instruments and forceful but not overbearing percussion creates a perfect weave of aural and visual pleasures that will bring a smile to the face of even the hardest to please movie buff.

It could be argued that that Kubrick's choice of music and how well he worked it in with the movie is one of the primary reasons for the film's lasting success. But to overlook the skills used in making the costumes and the sets would be unfair to the large contribution these aspects also make to the final product. Certainly the special effects were top-notch for the day, but just as important was how effectively they were used to tell the story.

The quality of the special effects are impressive, but the care taken to make them authentic is equally worthy of mention. The space scenes, for example, aren't filled with rocket noises and other sounds that simply don't exist in space. This presents Kubrick a chance to show his genius in music selection instead.

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Almost as apparent as the lack of sounds where they shouldn't be, is the inclusions of sounds where there should—almost to the point of becoming annoying. During the scenes in which the characters are working outside the ship while wearing their spacesuits, the noise of oxygen flowing from the regulators is overwhelmingly obvious and very difficult to ignore.

The costumes are also very well done. They aren't glitzy or complex, for that would put too much attention on things other than the clever story. The clothing modern man wears while in space was made very simple. Adequate enough to identify the characters and their roles, but not to the point where conscious thought is required to appreciate their effectiveness.

Many of the indoor scenes are equally effective in their simplicity. In one scene in a space station, there is a group of five astronauts having a conversation completely uninterrupted by unnecessarily busy surroundings. The walls, floors, chairs, and ceilings are a very simple white with small amounts of black and red for accents. Simple earth tones and primary colors are all that are used.

It's not always so simple. Kubrick has a keen sense of when to raise the bar. The ape costumes are far from simple. They're very well done costumes that may leave one wondering if they are indeed real apes.

This film's soundtrack, the clever use of sets and costumes, and the well thought out placement of some exceptional special effects gives Kubrick's work the staying power it needs to be remembered as a classic. But what some may argue is this film's strongest asset is a complex use of symbolism that has left generations trying to figure out the true meaning of this film.

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From the first scene, it's apparent that the creator is trying to tell us something aside from just showing some pretty pictures and playing some pleasing sounds. But what is this movie trying to tell us? The first few scenes show apes in the early stages of evolution. They're shown defending territory, learning to use tools, and showing dominance over lesser animals in the food chain. The later scenes, though certainly more modern and "civilized," show how man has changed very little in his evolution. His tools are certainly bigger and better, but the basic drives that make humans what they are have changed little since the dawn of time.

Kubrick's legacy will be carried on for many years to come through his numerous successful movies. Other impressive films such as *The Shining*, *A Clockwork Orange*, and *Eyes Wide Shut* all bear his mark. But *2001*'s perfect blend of all the necessary ingredients will likely make this the one that the colonists on Jupiter are watching on their holographic TV's in the years to come.