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TIME®

Marisa Berenson
in
'Barry Lyndon'

BRICK'S
ANDEST
AMBLE

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FIRST PARADOX: *Barry Lyndon*, a story of an 18th century Irish gentleman-rogue, is the first novel of a great 19th century writer, William Makepeace Thackeray. It shows early signs of a genius that would flourish only after creative struggle and personal adversity. In time, this forgotten book becomes the basis for the tenth feature film by a well-established, well-rewarded 20th century artist—Director Stanley Kubrick. In it, he demonstrates the qualities that eluded Thackeray: singularity of vision, mature mastery of his medium, near-reckless courage in asserting through this work a claim not just to the distinction critics have already granted him but to greatness that time alone can—and probably will—confirm.

SECOND PARADOX: As he did in *2001: A Space Odyssey*, Kubrick relies not on words—he is as sparing of them as Thackeray is profligate—but images to tell his story. Yet *Barry Lyndon* lacks the experimental, hallucinatory visual quality that made *2001* a cultural touchstone of the tripped-out '60s. Kubrick has shot and edited *Barry Lyndon* with the classic economy and elegance associated with the best works of the silent cinema. The frantic *trompe l'oeil* manner—all quick cuts and crazy angles—recently favored by ambitious film makers (and audiences) has been rigorously rejected.

This drive for cinematic purity has consumed three years of Kubrick's life and \$11 million of Warner Bros.' money. The film is 3 hr., 4 min. and 4 sec. long, and it does not easily yield up its themes. "The essence of dramatic form," says Kubrick, "is to let an idea come over people without its being plainly stated. When you say something directly, it is simply not as potent as it is when you allow people to discover it for themselves."

COVER STORY

KUBRICK'S GRANDEST GAMBLE

THIRD PARADOX: *Barry Lyndon* is obviously a costume drama but in a much more literal sense than any movie easily dismissed by that contemptuous phrase. Many of the clothes are not costumes at all but authentic antiques. The equally real interiors and landscapes—every foot of the film was shot on location—are intended to function as something more than exotic delights for the eye. Close scrutiny of the settings reveals not only the character of the people who inhabit them but the spirit of the entire age as Kubrick understands it.

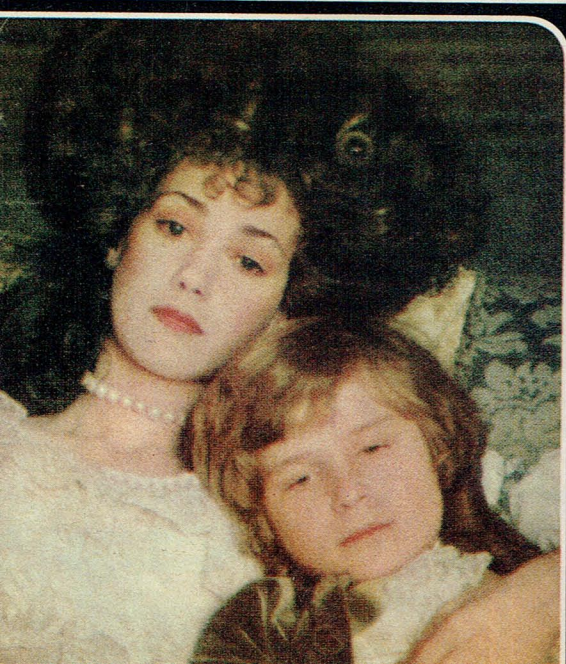
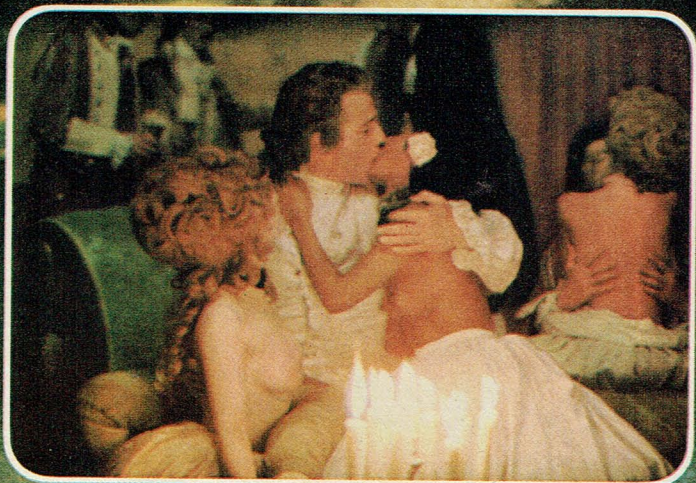
Though *Barry Lyndon* includes the duels, battles and romantic intrigues that we are conditioned to expect in movies about the past, it more often than not cuts away from this easy-to-savor material. This cool distancing suggests that the melodramatic passions normally sustaining our interest in films are petty matters. This vision of the past, like Kubrick's vision of the future in *2001*, invites us to experience an alien world not through its characters but with them—sensorially, viscerally. Stanley Kubrick's idea of what constitutes historical spectacle does not coincide with many people's—least of all, those in Warner's sales department. Which brings us to the...



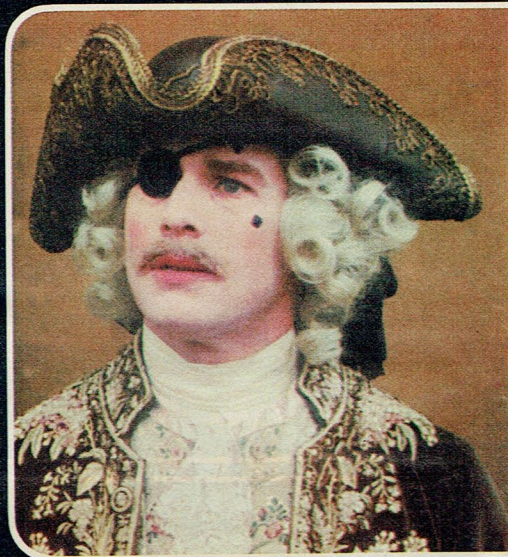
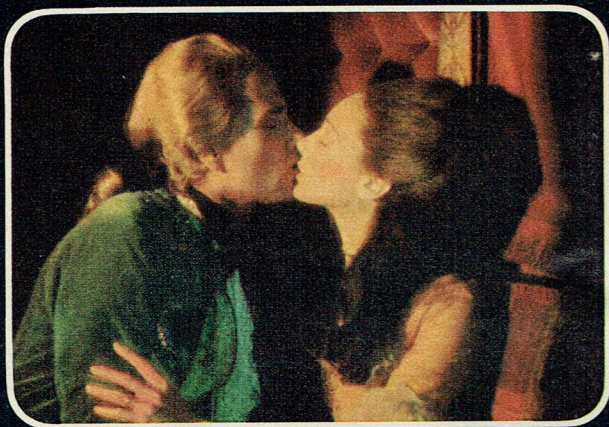
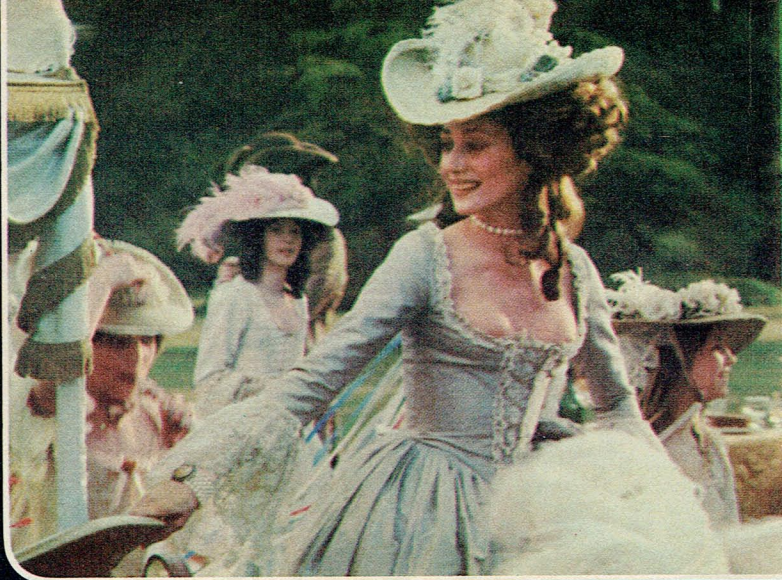
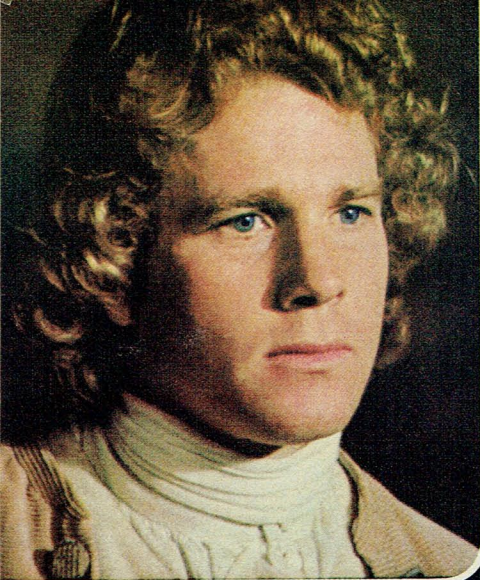
DIRECTOR STANLEY KUBRICK SURVEYS A SET FOR HIS NEW FILM, *Barry Lyndon*

FOURTH PARADOX: Having made what amounts to an art-film spectacle—something few directors since Griffith and Eisenstein have brought off—Kubrick now requires that his backers go out and sell the damned thing. Because of distribution and promotion costs, the film must gross at least \$30 million to make a profit. Kubrick has his own ideas about how to proceed: a tasteful ad campaign, a limited-release pattern permitting good word of mouth to build, saturation bookings timed to coincide with the Academy Award nominations that the director and studio believe are inevitable. Warner salesmen wish they had something simpler on their hands—a great sloshy romance like *Dr. Zhivago*, for instance, or at least a rollicking rip-off of olden times, like *Tom Jones*. Now Kubrick will help sell his picture. Among other things, he employs a bookkeeper to chart how films have played in the first-run houses of key cities, so his films can be booked into those with the best records. But the fact remains that his work habits are anything but helpful to publicists.

Multimillion-dollar movies are usually open to the press as they are being made; their heavy tread can be heard clumping toward the theaters for a year prior to release. Kubrick's loca-



BARRY LYNDON is a gambler, wastrel and adventurer. Top: a duel. Inset: Barry (Ryan O'Neal) in a bordello. Bottom left: Lady Lyndon (Marisa Berenson) and son Bryan (David Morley). Right: English battle French during Seven Years' War.



Clockwise from above: Barry wooing future wife; as a youth; Lady Lyndon at son's eighth birthday; Barry in disguise (crossing Prussian border); Lady Lyndon gambling with husband-to-be; Barry throttling rebellious stepson.



tions, however, were closed. Not a single publicity still emerged without the director's express approval, which was almost never granted. Thus the only word on *Barry Lyndon* came from actors and technicians, none of them privy to Kubrick's vision, and some wearied and literally sickened by his obsessive perfectionism.

At age 47, he is the creator of one of cinema's most varied and successful bodies of work; in addition to *2001*, it includes *Paths of Glory*, *Lolita*, *Doctor Strangelove* and *A Clockwork Orange*. He enjoys the rare right to final cut of his film without studio advice or interference. Warner executives were not permitted to see more than a few bits of it until the completed version—take it or leave it—was screened for them just three weeks ago. To put it mildly, it is hard for them to get a proper buildup going for their expensive property on such short notice.

FIFTH PARADOX: Stanley Kubrick himself. *Barry Lyndon* may be an austere epic, but an epic it surely is. Such works pose complex logistical and technical problems that must be solved along with the aesthetic questions that arise every time a new camera setup is chosen. Kubrick's basic cast and crew of 170—augmented by hundreds of extras and supporting specialists as needed—crawled from location to location across Ireland and England for 8½ months. Normally, the commanders of cinematic operations on this scale are outgoing, not to say colorfully flamboyant characters.

That, however, is precisely what Kubrick is not. He is almost reclusively shy. "a demented perfectionist, according to

the publicity mythology around me." This myth began building when he decided to stay on in England after shooting *Lolita* there in 1961. He found it "helpful not to be constantly exposed to the fear and anxiety that prevail in the film world." He lives and does all pre- and post-production work in a rambling manor house defended by two wooden walls and furnished in early nondescript. He rarely ventures forth even to London, less than an hour away. He prefers that the world—in controllable quantities—be brought to him via telex, telephone, television. All the books and movies this omnivorous reader-viewer requires are delivered to the retreat he shares with his third wife Christiane, his three daughters, three dogs and six cats. He is, says his friend, Film Critic Alexander Walker, "like a medieval artist living above his workshop." According to an actress who once worked for him, he is also "a mole."

What has the mole wrought? Is the finished film worth the pains he has taken with it—and given to his associates over the long years of its creation? The answer is a resounding yes.

Kubrick does not know what drew him to this tale of a scoundrel's rise and fall. Beyond noting that he has always enjoyed Thackeray, he does not try to explain his choice: "It's like trying to say why you fell in love with your wife—it's meaningless."

Possibly, but Kubrick's curiosity was probably aroused by the chance to explore a character who is his antithesis. About his work Kubrick is the most self-conscious and rational of men. His eccentricities—secretiveness, a great need for privacy—are caused by his intense awareness of time's relentless pas-

Girl from a Private World

Not even the Brothers Grimm would have dared to write a fairy tale about a girl who started at the top and stayed there. But that is the story of Marisa Berenson, 28, the suffering heroine of *Barry Lyndon*. The French fashion magazine *Elle* once called Marisa "the most beautiful girl in the world." That is not precisely accurate (both the mouth and nose are a trifle too large), but it conveys the right idea.

Marisa's father was the late Robert L. Berenson, a proper Bostonian and career diplomat. Her granduncle was the art historian Bernard Berenson. Her mother Gogo, now the Marchesa Cacciapuoti di Giuliano, was the daughter of Elsa Schiaparelli, the Parisian designer who introduced colors like shocking pink to the sober world of 1930s *haute couture*.

Impressive credentials, and they helped immensely a decade ago when Marisa decided to bid adieu to Gstaad, Paris and London and try to make it as a model in New York. But what really turned the trick was the lithe body, green eyes, pale ivory skin and a gaze that seemed to come from some pri-

vate world too secret to be spoken of. Marisa went on to live a *glacé* confection of a life spun out of *Vogue* covers, yacht cruises, love affairs with the likes of David de Rothschild and, at the moment, Auto Heir Ricky von Opel. Early in Marisa's career, *Vogue* Editor in Chief Diana Vreeland announced: "Many faces are alluring, but hers is chic. She can wear a hat like nobody else." She could also take it off: she posed nude for both *Vogue* and *Playboy*. "Some of the greatest works of art are of nudes," Marisa explains.

La vita turned really *dolce* for Marisa in 1971, when Luchino Visconti signed her for her first film as the elegant young mother in *Death in Venice*. Bob Fosse then hired her to play the German-Jewish department store heiress in *Cabaret*. Both parts required Marisa to appear both remote and vulnerable. She is very good at it.

Today, trying to explain what he found in her, Stanley Kubrick says: "There is a sort of tragic sense about her." Actors do not always see their leading ladies as directors do, and Ryan O'Neal wondered why Kubrick had cast her. "Overbred, vacuous, giggly and lazy," were Ryan's first impressions; as the filming progressed, O'Neal decided that the role called for Marisa to be just that. "She'll be nominated for an Oscar," he says. "But she's just being herself."

A bit churlish, that. Yet Marisa seems to sense that life with the trendies, where role playing is *de rigueur*, has locked her into an outgrown character. She concedes that in her younger days, her own shyness gave her a frantic need to be on the scene. Modeling gave her self-confidence, and acting "is a vent for my fantasies." Last week in Manhattan, cuddling her Shih Tzu, K.K. (short for King Kong), she reminisced about her most notable fantasy to date, Lady Lyndon. Done up like a portrait by Gainsborough, Marisa seems the model of 18th century English womanhood, even to the torrents of tears Lady Lyndon sheds at her son's death. "I could do nothing else but cry, looking at that sweet boy—I am quite good at crying," says Marisa. "Once I start, I can go on and on."

MARISA BERENSON & K.K., HER LAP DOG, RELAXING IN MANHATTAN



HENRY GROSSMAN



KUBRICK WATCHES A CHESS GAME ON *THE KILLING* SET (1956)

sage. He wants to use time to "create a string of masterpieces," as an acquaintance puts it. Social status means nothing to him, money is simply a tool of his trade.

Barry, on the other hand, suffers a monstrous complacency. He betrays not the slightest moral or intellectual self-awareness. Born poor but with a modest claim to gentleman's rank, he never doubts his right to rise to the highest ranks of the nobility. Nor does he ever seem to question the various means by which he pursues his end: army desertion, card sharpening, contracting a loveless marriage in order to acquire a fortune. As for time, it means nothing to him. He squanders it, as he does money, in pursuit of pleasure and the title he is desperate for.

In the novel, Thackeray used a torrent of words to demonstrate Barry's lack of self-knowledge. Narrating his own story, Barry so obviously exaggerates his claims to exemplary behavior that the reader perceives he is essentially a braggart and poltroon. Daringly, Kubrick uses silence to make the same point. "People like Barry are successful because they are not obvious—they don't announce themselves," says Kubrick. So it is mainly by the look in Ryan O'Neal's eyes—a sharp glint when he spies the main chance, a gaze of hurt befuddlement when things go awry—that we understand Barry's motives. And since he cannot see his own face, we can be certain he is not aware of these self-betrays. According to Kubrick, Barry's silence also implies that "he is not very bright," he is an overreacher who "gets in over his head in situations he doesn't fully understand." Though a certain dimness makes him a less obviously comic figure than he is in the book, it also makes him a more believable one. And it permits Kubrick to demonstrate, without shattering the movie's tone, Barry's two nearly saving graces—physical gallantry and desperate love of his only child, whose death is the film's emotional high point and the tragedy that finally undoes Barry.

With the exception of Humbert Humbert in *Lolita*, this is the first time that Kubrick has moved beyond pop archetypes and taken the measure of a man with a novelist's sense of psychological nuance. Still, it is not as a study in character that *Barry Lyndon* will be ultimately remembered. The structure of the work is truly novel. In addition, Kubrick has assembled perhaps the most ravishing set of images ever printed on a single strip of celluloid. These virtues are related: the structure would not work without Kubrick's sustaining mastery of the camera, lighting and composition; the images would not be so powerful if the director had not devised a narrative structure spacious enough for them to pile up with overwhelming impressiveness.

As a design, *Barry Lyndon* is marvelously simple. The first half offers something like a documentary of 18th century manners and morals. To be sure, a lot happens to Barry in this segment—first love, first duel, first wanderings, first military combat—but he remains pretty much a figure in the foreground, rather like those little paper cutouts architects place on their models to give a sense of scale. What matters to the director



HE POSES WITH SUE LYON DURING *LOLITA* FILMING (1961)

is the world beyond, the world Barry is so anxious to conquer.

And it is a great world, especially to the modern eye, accustomed as it is to cluttered industrialized landscapes, and architecture and décor that stress the purely functional. The recurring visual motif of the film—especially obvious in the first portion—is a stately pullback. Typically, it starts on some detail, like a closeup of an actor, then moves slowly back to reveal the simple beauty of the countryside that is as indifferent to the player's petty pursuits as he is impervious to its innocent charm. The lighting in all the outdoor sequences appears to be completely natural and patiently—expensively—waited for. Frequently, most of the emotional information for a scene may be found in the light, before anyone says a word. A superb example of this occurs when Barry discovers his first love flirting in a garden with a man who is everything he is not—mature, wealthy, well born, English and an army officer to boot. The late afternoon sun, soft as the lyric of a love ballad, literally dies along with Barry's hopes of romance.

Indoors, there are similar revelations, thanks in part to space-age technology. Kubrick found a way to fit an incredibly fast (F 0.7) 50mm. still-camera lens, developed by Zeiss, onto a motion-picture camera. It permitted him to film night interiors using only the light available to inhabitants of the 18th century. Some scenes are illuminated by just a single candle; in others, hundreds gutter in the candelabra and chandeliers of great halls, bathing the screen in a gentle, wonderfully moody orange glow that almost no one now alive has ever experienced.

In the hands of another director, all this embellishment might seem an idle exercise, perhaps even proof of the old movie adage that when a director dies he becomes a cameraman. The first half of *Barry Lyndon* deliberately violates every rule of sound dramatic composition. Only a few of the scenes end in powerful emotion or conflict, and there is no strong arc to the overall design of the piece. And yet our attention never wanders: such is Kubrick's gift for lighting and composing a scene, such is the strength of his desire to prove that movies "haven't scratched the surface of how to tell stories in their own terms."

The thought is not new. Everyone who has worked in or thought seriously about the cinema knows that the angle of a shot or the rhythm of a scene's editing can impart information more economically than a long stretch of dialogue. What is novel is that Kubrick has acted so firmly on the basis of that nearly conventional wisdom in the film's first half—the half that must catch and hold the attention of a mass audience (*The Towering*

Inferno crowd) if his picture is to succeed commercially.

It is a big risk, an act of the highest artistic confidence. Reassurance comes in the strong melodrama of the film's second half. From the moment Marisa Berenson, playing Lady Lyndon, appears and Barry's suit for her hand succeeds, the film, without seeming to change its style or gently enfolding pace, gathers tremendous dramatic force of a quite conventional sort. Barry's loveless use of her to further his ambitions has a raw, shocking edge. His conflict with her son by her first marriage, culminating in what is surely the most gripping duel ever filmed, is full of angry uncontrolled passion. Barry's innocent infatu-

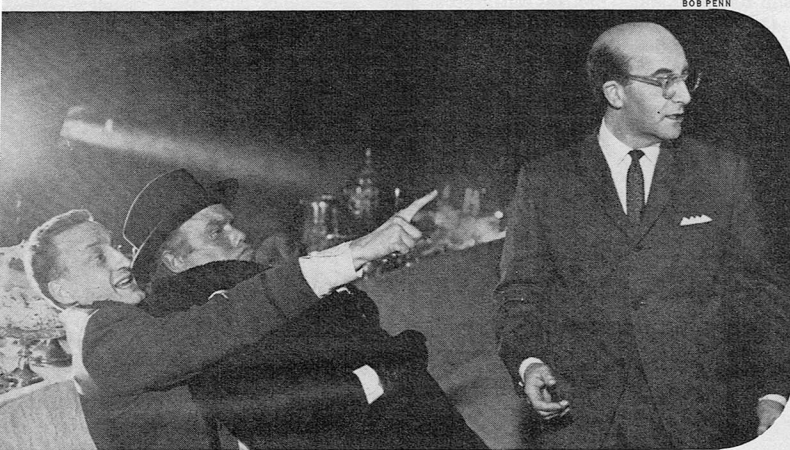
out of his own experience or fantasy life. Indeed, the creation of fiction awes him. "It is one of the most phenomenal human achievements," he says. "And I have never done it." Instead, he must do "detective work—find out about the things about which I have no direct experience." These, of course, offer metaphors in which to cloak such observations—they are never direct messages—that he cares to share with the world.

Research aids him in another way. Movie sets—even the cool, orderly ones Kubrick is famous for running—seethe with logistical, technical and emotional problems. As Kubrick mildly puts it, "The atmosphere is inimical to making subtle aesthetic decisions."

He is unable to determine how to shoot a scene until he sees a set fully dressed and lit. This is a moment of maximum risk. Says Ryan O'Neal, who plays Barry: "The toughest part of Stanley's day was finding the right first shot. Once he did that, other shots fell into place. But he agonized over that first one."

It is precisely then that Kubrick's memory bank, well stocked with odd details, comes into play. "Once, when he was really stymied, he began to search through a book of 18th century art reproductions," recalls O'Neal. "He found a painting—I don't remember which one—and posed Marissa and me exactly as if we were in that painting."

Most of his performers seem to worship Kubrick. One reason is that he is always willing to give their suggestions a trial run or two. He is also in-



BOB PENN

PENTAGON SCENE FROM *DR. STRANGELOVE* (1963) WITH GEORGE C. SCOTT, PETER SELLERS

ation with his own child, "the hope of his family, the pride of his manhood," has a touching, redeeming warmth to it. His downfall, much more dramatically rendered by Kubrick than by Thackeray, has a tragic starkness and a moral correctness. In short, Kubrick has accomplished what amounts to a minor miracle—an uncompromised artistic vision that also puts all of Warner Bros. money "on the screen," as Kubrick says, borrowing an old trade term. He feels he has done right by himself and "done right by the people who gave me the money," presenting them with the best possible chance to make it back with a profit on their investment.

Kubrick turned to *Barry Lyndon* after a projected biography of Napoleon proved too complex and expensive even for him. He reread the novel several times, "looking for traps, making sure it was do-able." With typically elaborate caution, he got Warners' backing on the basis of an outline in which names, places and dates were changed so no one could filch from him a story in the public domain. He then settled down to work on script and research. The latter may be, for him, the more important undertaking. "Stanley is voracious for information. He wants glorious choice," says his associate producer, Bernard Williams. Adds Costume Designer Milena Canonero: "He wants to see everything. He wants at his fingertips the knowledge, the feeling of the period."

Kubrick is a self-taught man with an autodidact's passion for facts and the process of gathering them. Son of a Bronx physician, he was an indifferent high school student. He experimented endlessly with cameras and at 17 was hired by *Look* as a staff photographer. He learned something about people and a lot about photography, traveling the country shooting pictures for 4½ years. At 21, he made his first short subject, three years later his first fictional feature—very low budget. He also audited Columbia University courses conducted by the likes of Lionel Trilling and Mark Van Doren, and became a tireless reader with catholic tastes. "I can become interested in anything," he says. "Delving into a subject, discovering facts and details—I find that easy and pleasurable."

It is also essential to his work. For one thing, he finds it impossible to invent an entirely original story, something drawn



THE "DROOGS" ON ATTACK IN *A CLOCKWORK ORANGE* (1971)

telligent about not overdirecting them. "Stanley is a great believer in the man," says Murray Melvin, who is superb in the role of a snaky spiritual adviser to Lady Lyndon. "You have to do it." Adds Patrick Magee, who plays a gambler: "The catchwords on the set are 'Do it faster, do it slower, do it again.' Mostly, 'Do it again.'"

Melvin did one scene 50 times. "I knew he had seen something I had done. But because he was a good director, he wouldn't tell me what it was. Because if someone tells you you've done a good bit, then you know it and put it in parentheses and kill it. The better actor you were, the more he drew out of you."

There is no sadism in Kubrick's insistence on huge numbers of retakes. He did not press Berenson or the children in his cast, only the established professionals he knew could stand up under

A Star Is Waiting

Ryan O'Neal has been unusually quiet lately. He finished his work on *Barry Lyndon* in July 1974 and, despite numerous offers, has avoided work since, so convinced is he that the film will radically change his image with the public and his standing in the movie business.

Not that there is anything especially wrong with either. Now 34, he has had three hits in five years in romantic and light comic roles (*Love Story*, *What's Up, Doc?* and *Paper Moon*, in which his daughter stole the show). He is generally regarded by movie people as a hard-working actor and an

DOMINIC SAVAGE



RYAN O'NEAL FLINGS A FRISBEE ON THE *LYNDON* SET

his search for the best they had to offer. "Actors who have worked a lot in movies," Kubrick says mildly, "don't really get a sense of intense excitement into their performances until there is film running through the camera." Moreover, the "beady eye" that several insist was cast on them as they worked is merely a sign of the mesmerizing concentration he brings to his work.

Originally Kubrick, who likes to sleep in his own bed and likes even more to save the money it costs to house and feed a crew on location, had hoped to shoot the entire picture within a 90-minute range of home. He dispatched photographers to all the great houses within that circle, hoping to find the look he wanted. Impossible. He then decided to shoot in Ireland, where the early sections of the book are set anyway. After a couple of months there, however, the I.R.A.—or someone using its name—made telephone threats to the production. Kubrick decamped for rural England, where he used rooms in at least four different stately homes, artfully cut together to give Hackton Castle, Lady Lyndon's digs, spaciousness and richness. At Corsham Court, he was told that if he did not kill his lights within 30 minutes, irreparable harm would be done to the priceless paintings in the room where he was shooting. Similar incidents sent the budget soaring, giving an extra twist to the pressures Kubrick felt. Nerves produced a rash on his hands that did not disappear until the film was wrapped, and though he had quit smoking, he started cadging cigarettes.

Still, things could have been worse. Warner's production chief, John Calley, was always tolerant. "It would make no sense to tell Kubrick, 'O.K., fella, you've got one more week to finish the thing,'" he says. "What you would get then is a mediocre film that cost say, \$8 million, instead of a masterpiece that cost \$11 million. When somebody is spending a lot of your money, you are wise to give him time to do the job right."

agreeable off-the-set companion. It is just that in a career that began in early '60s television and got rolling with a five-year stint on *Peyton Place*, Ryan has never known anyone quite like Stanley Kubrick. "God, he works you hard," he wrote in the diary he kept all during the ten months he was before the cameras. "He moves you, pushes you, helps you, gets cross with you, but above all he teaches you the value of a good director."

Never having worked with a world-class director, O'Neal eagerly underwent something like a conversion. "Stanley brought out aspects of my personality and acting instincts that had been dormant. I had to deliver up everything he wanted, and he wanted just about everything I had."

Not only was the work demanding; it was also uncomfortable. It took O'Neal into the remotest corners of Ireland and England—not exactly the natural habitat of a fellow who does enjoy the occasional comforts of a bird and a *boite*. Nevertheless, he was sustained by "my strong suspicion that I was involved in something great."

Whether or not his patient faith in *Lyndon* will be rewarded is a nice question. There is no doubt that Kubrick permitted him to explore a wider range of emotions than he ever has on screen. There is no doubt either that his performance is technically expert. On the other hand, he has been carefully muted by the director. O'Neal, who has finally decided to go back to work in January with Tatum and Burt Reynolds in a new Peter Bogdanovich film, could be disappointed in the response his hard work generates. "The real star of a Kubrick movie is Stanley Kubrick" is Producer Ray Stark's shrewd comment, implying that O'Neal's hope for the role may be in vain.

If so, he will still have an improved talent and some warm memories to console him. Once, after days of effort, he finally managed to deliver exactly what Kubrick wanted in a difficult scene. "He found a way to walk past me, giving instructions to the crew—'Let's move on to 32, move those lights into the foreground,' and so on—but as he passed me, he grabbed my hand and squeezed it. It was the most beautiful and appreciated gesture in my life. It was the greatest moment in my career."

Calley admits he has no idea whether masterpieces are going to sell this season. "The business is, at best, a crap shoot. The fact that Stanley thinks the picture will gross in nine figures is very reassuring. He is never far wrong about anything." If Kubrick is right, he will be rich. By the terms of his deal with Warner, he receives 40% of *Barry Lyndon's* profits. Only one picture in history—*Jaws*—has made "nine figures"; it passed the \$100 million mark last week.

As for Kubrick, he is still working 18 hours a day, overseeing the final fine tuning of the sound track while keeping one compulsively attentive eye on the orchestration of the publicity buildup. It is something he feels he must do, just as he personally checked the first 17 prints of *A Clockwork Orange* before they went out to the theaters. "There is such a total sense of demoralization if you say you don't care. From start to finish on a film, the only limitations I observe are those imposed on me by the amount of money I have to spend and the amount of sleep I need. You either care or you don't, and I simply don't know where to draw the line between those two points."

He does not believe a single flop will cost him his ability to create independently, though he may occasionally think of a line in *The Killing*, his first major studio release in 1956. A thief muses that people romanticize gangsters and artists, but they are also eager to see them brought low.

Much more often, however, Stanley Kubrick is armored in the serene belief that whatever judgment the public passes on his new movie when it opens next week, he has fulfilled the director's basic ideal, which is to shoot "economically and with as much beauty and gracefulness as possible." Beyond that, he adds, "All you can do is either pose questions or make truthful observations about human behavior. The only morality is not to be dishonest." *Barry Lyndon* fulfills that ideal as well.