

Kubrick: Odyssey into the inane

Aidan Hanratty
Cinema Editor

A certain inkling, of a previously unknown concept, has been hatching in my brain for a while now. It all started a few weekends ago when *The Shining* was on TV. Being of course a Belushi for the 21st century, I rarely find myself sitting at home on a Friday evening but in any case, here I was – with nothing to do and a whole night to do it, I decided to kill maybe two hours by watching the classic Jack Torrance/Nicholson performance we all know and love. This was when it began.

I don't know if it was the intrusive soundscaping that runs all the way through the film or the constant cut ins to Jack's face, scowling like he's just caught another man tapping Lara Flynn Boyle but slowly, by little increments, I began to realise that *The Shining* is a big steaming pile of crap. It's overwrought to an nth degree, Shelley Duvall's mewling face can't help but get on your tits and at the end you're left wondering, as Jack freezes to death, "so fucking what".

This was like a Road to Damascus experience (only in reverse and of infinitely less importance) for that night I embraced unbelief and finally knew that Stanley Kubrick is possibly the most over-rated filmmaker of all time, up there with George Lucas, Steven Spielberg, Oliver Stone, Pedro Almodovar.

Let's have a look at the evidence. Exhibit A has to be *Clockwork Orange*. The clothes, the garish sets, the muzakified rephrasings of Ludwig Van; this dated piece of 70's throwback kitsch is as out of place as

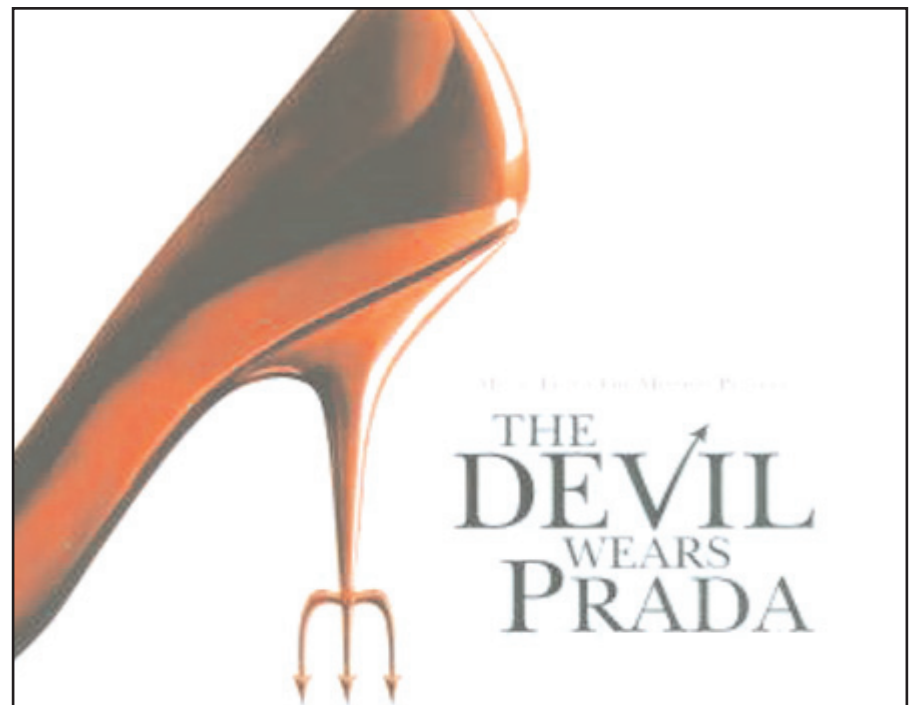
the phrase "Hip to your groove, Daddy-O". It features what are honestly some of the most needlessly violent scenes of rape, murder and assorted hijinks. Like *The Shining* the soundtrack constantly gets in the way of whatever action there is and that scene with the Oirish bum should make anyone born west of Liverpool cringe from ear to ear.

Then there's *Full Metal Jacket*, a film beloved by all those people who know nothing about film. Like *Snatch* or *True Romance* or *Clerks*. Granted the first act in the training camp is fairly faultless. The intimate, clinical analysis of Vincent D'Onofrio's mental breakdown is brilliantly realised.

But Kubrick's biggest mistake here is the same one Lyndon Johnson made twenty years earlier; he got involved in a long drawn out war in South East Asia. The next two-thirds of the film is an unedifying mess. Shouldn't a truly great film should be great all the way through? Does the excellent opening sequence of *Saving Private Ryan* stop the remainder of the film stinking like a dead dog?

The final nail in the coffin has to be *Eyes Wide Shut*. The wooden features of Tom Cruise and wife, the pseudo-Freudian overtones, the banal characters, the utter pointlessness of it all. This was a poor end.

(Notable exceptions: *Dr Strangelove* and *2001: A Space Odyssey*. These are excellent films. *Dr Strangelove* is hilarious and has one of the best endings of any film ever made. *2001: A Space Odyssey* is a brilliant film but I have no idea why, and that's the proof of it's brilliance. Its like the novels of Mikhail Bulgakov or the music of Kraftwerk. Its so good it's beyond comprehension.)



Film Review

The Devil Wears Prada

Vicky Notaro
Cinema Writer

Film adaptations of best-selling novels are ten a penny these days - it seems Hollywood has finally run out of original ideas, so as an alternative to remaking (and most likely making a hames of) classic films, bigwig producers are heading to their local Eason's, reaching for the top ten and deciding how they can rework this book or that book into commercial fodder.

Such is the case with *The Devil Wears Prada*, with one exception - it's good. Based on the New York Times Number One by former Vogue employee Lauren Weisberger, it tells the story of a young graduate in the big city scoring her first proper job at one of the worlds largest fashion magazines, the "fictional" (or pseudonymous?) *Runway*. Hilarious escapades follow as the clueless Andy, played charmingly by Anne Hathaway, struggles with her tyrannical boss' unbelievable demands, and the strain put on her relationships by her desire to succeed.

While the screenplay is barely recognisable from the book, and the only things the two have in common are the basic premise, *The Devil Wears Prada* is not mindless tosh, nor a chick flick. Weisbergers novel is assumed by many to be based on her time spent as Anna Wintour, the fearsome editor of Vogue's personal assistant.

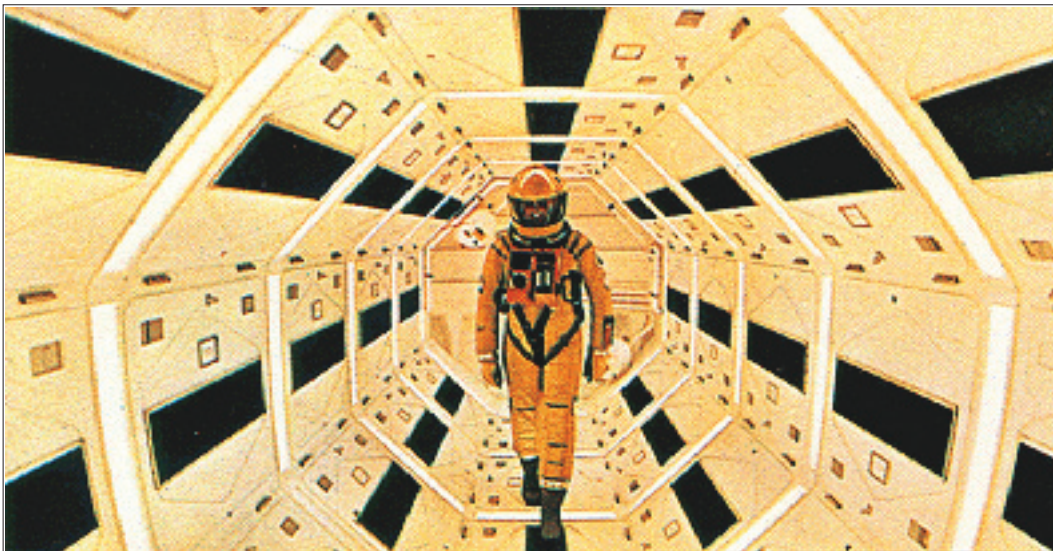
The scriptwriter has dissected the novel, inventing far more zany and wild adventures for Andy to cope with, and in some ways losing some of the book's charm, but the bottom line with the film is that it is a character driven piece, made essentially by its high glamour content -

beautiful models making cameos, glittering urban locations like Paris and Manhattan, and a hefty budget for designer clothing - a couple of high grade performances and some comic one liners. Yet it is not all show, managing to capture the essence of Andy's overwhelming new life. The fundamental story of the film, of a young girl coming out into the big bad world will strike a chord with everyone - its added bonus being that it's dressed up in couture. There is the usual dowdy girl next door to model chic makeover, but somehow it doesn't seem contrived, with the viewer recognising the physical transformation as synonymous with Andy's professional one.

Meryl Streep is fantastic, as always, as the wicked Miranda Priestly, a woman so hell bent on success and maddened by her own power that her life is crumbling around her.

Hathaway is likeable, and the audience is rooting for her right from the start, her puppy dog eyes used marvellously in her performance. The tale could ring slightly anti feminist, as Miranda's family clearly suffers from her drive and notoriety, and Andy's personal life from her devotion to her career, but this is more of a comment on the overworked of any sex, particularly "leisure free zone" New Yorkers, than on the professional women of the millennium.

The Devil Wears Prada is funny (often hilarious), and sassy, but not shallow. Yes, it's set in the devastatingly fabulous fashion world, but you don't need to know your Prada from your Pucci to enjoy it. This mightn't be the film of choice for a gaggle of lads or those who like their movies stirringly dramatic or tensely thrilling, but *The Devil Wears Prada* is a new twist on an old tale - a sexy glamorous coming of age comedy that explores the world of high society and high ambitions, while remaining down to earth enough for those of us who wear our Penney's with pride.



A scene from Kubrick's 1968 film, *2001: A Space Odyssey*