

G.B. (Hawk) 93m BW

Director: Stanley Kubrick

Producer: Stanley Kubrick, Victor Lyndon

Screenplay: Terry Southern, Stanley Kubrick, from the novel *Red Alert* by Peter George

Photography: Gilbert Taylor

Music: Laurie Johnson

Cast: Peter Sellers, George C. Scott, Sterling Hayden, Keenan Wynn, Slim Pickens, Peter Bull, James Earl Jones, Tracy Reed, Jack Creley, Frank Berry, Robert O'Neil, Glenn Beck, Roy Stephens, Shane Rimmer, Hal Galili

Oscar nomination: Stanley Kubrick (director), Stanley Kubrick (best picture), Stanley Kubrick, Peter George, Terry Southern (screenplay) Peter Sellers (actor)

DR. STRANGELOVE (1964) OR: HOW I LEARNED TO STOP WORRYING AND LOVE THE BOMB

"Gentlemen, you can't fight in here! This is the War Room!" *Dr. Strangelove* is a brilliant black comedy that works as political satire, suspense farce, and cautionary tale of technology running away with us. When a fanatical U.S. general launches a nuclear attack on the U.S.S.R. the President has his hands full recalling bombers and calming Russians while contending with his advisers and a twisted scientist. The thriller plot came from a serious novel by RAF officer Peter George, published in the United States as *Red Alert* and in the United Kingdom as *Two Hours to Doom*. Kubrick loved it but thought people were so overwhelmed by the threat of annihilation that they were in denial, apathetic to nuclear documentary or drama. So he would surprise audiences into reacting to the real prospect of global extermination with outrageously funny and provocative cartoon tactics.

Kubrick and cowriter Terry Southern created a cast of grotesques whose absurd fixations, by their incongruity, play up the realism against which they are set (and which is enhanced by Gilbert Taylor's outstanding black-and-white cinematography). The information about a doomsday device is factual, as are the Strategic Air Command operations and the B-52 crew's procedures. The computers that take the situation beyond human intervention have only become more capable. Be afraid. Be very afraid.

There are just three locations, each experiencing a failure to communicate. At Burbank Air Force Base, maniacal General Jack D. Ripper (Sterling Hayden), obsessed with bodily fluids and commie conspiracy, circumvents Fail-Safe protocol and orders a bomber wing to nuke the "Russkies," taking appalled RAF officer Lionel Mandrake (Peter Sellers) captive. Aboard the B-52 code-named Leper Colony, dogged Major T.J. "King" Kong (Slim Pickens) and his crew (including James Earl Jones in his debut) suffer radio failure and are oblivious to frantic efforts to recall them. In the War Room at The Pentagon—an awesome set by production designer Ken Adam—President Merkin Muffley (Sellers), rampant General Buck Turgidson (George C. Scott), Soviet Ambassador de Sadesky (Peter Bull), and demented Dr. Strangelove (Sellers again, in Kubrick's nod to *Metropolis's* mad scientist Rotwang) are gathered in a futile attempt to stop Armageddon.



Sellers's sidesplitting three performances are legend but the entire ensemble gives a masterclass in exaggerated, perfectly timed posturing. Two images are unforgettable—Kong astride the H-bomb, yee-hawing all the way down, and demented Dr. Strangelove, unable to stop his mechanical arm from flying into the Nazi salute and throttling himself. Every viewing is a reminder the film is stuffed with hilarious dialogue, and President Muffley on the hot line to Moscow breaking it to the Soviet Premier that one of his base commanders "went and did a silly thing" remains a classic monologue. Kubrick would return to the potential menace of computer dependency in *2001: A Space Odyssey*, to institutional and political violence in *A Clockwork Orange*, and to the savage, surreal madness of war in *Full Metal Jacket*. But he never made us laugh this much in any other film. **AE**

