



Eyes Wide Open: A Memoir of Stanley Kubrick

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The author describes his experiences working with Stanley Kubrick on his last film, Eyes Wide Shut.

Eyes Wide Open: A Memoir of Stanley Kubrick Details

Date : Published June 22nd 1999 by Ballantine Books (first published 1999)

ISBN : 9780345437761

Author : Frederic Raphael

Format : Paperback 190 pages

Genre : Culture, Film, Biography, Nonfiction, Media Tie In, Movies

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Ben De Bono says

The most fascinating thing about Eyes Wide Open is the enormous divide between the book Raphael thinks he's writing and the one he actually wrote. He thinks he's delivering a loving but hard-hitting expose of Stanley Kubrick where he reveals him as a maniacal genius whose own success is hampered by his inability to truly let others into the creative process. In reality, he's written an expose of himself as a talented but incredibly pretentious writer who chafes under the experience of being made a cog in the Kubrick machine.

I imagine a psychologist could have a field day with Raphael's feelings toward Kubrick. He goes from ranting about him to showing a sycophantic obsession with pleasing him - often within the same page. He'll praise his genius and then try to set himself up as a creative superior. It's really bizarre but also fascinating watching him unravel on the page.

Here's the thing about working with Kubrick: there's no doubt he could make life hell for those in his employ. I don't blame anyone for disliking that or for not wanting to be a part of it. However, if you study Kubrick enough you understand that it's not maniacal sadism but a very intricate creative process. Raphael simply doesn't get that or if he does his ego leads him to reject being a part of that process.

The end result is a really fascinating read though for reasons almost entirely different than what Raphael intended

Bouilloire says

3,5/5.

Le livre aurait plutôt dû s'intituler : *Deux ans à travailler sur le scénario d'Eyes Wide Shut*. Hormis ce détail, il se lit tout seul et est plutôt intéressant si on veut en savoir plus sur le travail d'adaptation.

Matthew App says

Perfect for anyone who wants to read about Kubrick's creative process.

Fabian says

Fan service supreme! Finally, my own fanboy flames are extinguished, & it feels oh-so good.

This little slice of cinematic anecdote-slash-memoir is a must for all cinephiles. For Kubrick is like the Picasso of the medium: you love him or hate him but you must admit he's genius. & Raphael excels at making this into something eyeopening and unique. A unique account of the celluloid demigod which only someone "under the dragon's wing" could afford to tell us!

Cymru Roberts says

Eyes Wide Shut was a big movie for me before I really even knew who Kubrick was. It mattered at a time when I didn't even know about directors. I became obsessed with it as a coded piece of Illuminati cinema, and at the time (long long ago) I wanted to learn everything I could about it. Somehow I never came across this book back then, but if I had I imagine I would have chucked it in the wastebin within the first 50 or so pages, cuz there aint shit in it about the fooken film!

Reading it now, I was more focused on what it would say about Kubrick. "A Memoir of Stanley Kubrick" it claims to be. It is not. It is a 190-page hatchet job by one of the most jealous assholes to ever pick up a pen. Freddy Rafael (unknown if there is any relation to Sally Jesse) is so put off by Kubrick's unwillingness to constantly congratulate him on his misconstruction of points, dumb stories, and flat-out insults, that the dude, as one reviewer here put it, "literally comes apart on the page." The author goes to Kubrick's house and is only offered sandwiches instead of a buffet. Rafi *literally* complains about this. He belittles Kubrick every chance he gets, which seems, um, a bit...inaccurate? The few details he gives about how he would have done *EWS* make it very obvious that Rafi's version would have absolutely sucked, whereas Kubrick's is a classic. Funny, too, that Rafi boy is a goddamn Oscar winner! Guess even the successful aren't happy...

In a secondhand way, we do learn something about Kubrick, however. He never engaged with collaborators, much to their frustration. Instead I think he was constantly testing waters. He'd throw an idea and see what the collaborator would do with it, and keep throwing until it struck whatever it was he was looking for. I also think he stripped things down in order to pull their essence out, the way a photographer might order that her subject keep a straight face, or no face at all. Apparently this really bothered people, especially writers, that he worked with. I just feel like they didn't get it. Maybe I don't either, but one thing is certain: Kubrick is awesome, and Freddy boy Rafael fuckin' sucks.

Ben says

Worth reading for some inside info on Kubrick and to find out what a pretentious ass Raphael is. At one point he's so overcome with emotion that he has to express himself in French (even though English is his first language). What a tool.

Rayan Brantdt says

a bloated corpse floating down a river of self-congratulatory anecdotes, Fredric Raphael is a man who i imagine chuckles politely aloud at his own internalized jokes. he will probably live forever because he refuses to die by any means other than certain occurrences which will end his life with a bittersweet tinge of cultivated poetic irony, becoming of an AUTHOR AND SCHOLAR of his caliber. this is less a memoir of Stanley Kubrick and more a reference page from the world's most pretentious resume. all of the dialogue between FR and SK is transcribed through the use of interview formatting, though it feels like the half-remembered daydreams of a man with a severe case of L'esprit de l'escalier (though Fred is fluent in French and every other language that has touched the tips of tongues [alliteration] throughout history, i had to use google to find out how to spell this phrase). Stanley Kubrick comes off as a simple-minded man with the audacity to trim the beautiful plastic rosebush with liquid latex dew-drops that is Freddie's creative output, as

a man who hesitates to flaunt his genius at every corner and thus calls his legitimacy into question. there is practically no insight into kubrick's cinematic process, life's tribulations, opinions, personality, or reception to his pedestaled status as a lauded filmmaker. it seems as though FR's interactions with SK were relatively distant and rarely strayed from professionalism, though the back cover cites 'hours of conversation about a variety of topics', that 'Stanley Kubrick opened himself to Frederic through their close personal friendship' or something. the advertised 'bonding' of these two men exists solely through brief, remembered dialogues and insufferable entries from Raphael's diary during the time period of their collaboration. I learned alot about Kubrick's mythical perfectionism through lazily written accounts of a disappointing latin paper that Fredric Raphael wrote in college, and was thoroughly entertained by a million heavy handed greek mythology metaphors. "Sarcasm, one of my many talents ;]" - Fred Raph

an exploitative grasp at the chalice of vicarious creative worth, i give this memoir a 'fuck you'/10.

Cinematic Cteve says

A remarkably candid look at the working relationship between the author and the great director on what would be Kubrick's swansong film, the oft-misunderstood Eyes Wide Shut.

Oscar-winning screenwriter Raphael's fast read (186 pages) offers a fascinating glimpse into the creative process behind translating a 1926 Austrian novel into a contemporary American fable of marital (in)fidelity and sexual politics.

Most revealing are the anecdotes about the notoriously reclusive Kubrick and what it was like to be in his company. The key takeaway seems to be that Kubrick often used his genius to manage people and ultimately keep them at arm's length. Still, the author got as close as anyone has in penetrating into the director's mind by way of hours of conversation with him. We learn about Kubrick's working methods, his obsessions with sex, celebrity and the precision accuracy of the most mundane details in every aspect of his creative life. Ultimately, the picture emerges of a phenomenally gifted film director who was still just a man, struggling with self-doubt and creative indecision as he toiled to make one more film that might approximate the legacy he had already achieved.

The book also provides much entertaining inside baseball on the mechanics of getting a film made within the studio system. Written with the eye of a novelist, this memoir should satisfy cinephiles and those fascinated by the machinations of the creative mind.

Matt says

Fascinating insight into the process of collaboration and ego.

Willy Boy says

Raphael spins a book out of close but obviously limited contact with Kubrick during the making of Eyes Wide Shut. This amounts to several visits to the director's home, and many phone conversations. A quick, easy read. As a first-person account of the publicity shy director, this is essential reading for Kubrick scholars, but very little of lasting interest is revealed. Similar to Michael Herr's 'Kubrick', which also made a

rapid journey to bookshops following the director's death, although markedly less generous in spirit.

Jing Bo says

It's odd to me that most people who read this book thought that Frederic Raphael was vindictively attacking Stanley Kubrick. This conclusion could not be farther from the truth. It's clear from the book that there is a deep respect between F.R. and S.K. Perhaps this was communicated in a manner most people aren't accustomed to. Perhaps people are accustomed expecting only heaping praise whenever artists talk about each. Praise does not mean respect. Critiques do not mean a lack of respect.

David says

This is a worthwhile read for its rare glimpse into Kubrick's working methods, but ultimately the common criticism of it is true. Raphael spends a preposterous amount of pages on silly analogies to ancient myths in which he is always the defeated servant to the God-like maestro Kubrick, etc. Raphael has the very grandiose, inflated self-image that Kubrick - the more humble man, as even this biased book proves - was always wrongly purported to possess.

In reality, Kubrick simply wanted a writer who had something - information - which he didn't. Primarily, he needed a little help in updating the Schnitzler novella 70+ years to the then-present day. He didn't want a best buddy or a 50/50 creative partner; merely someone to bounce ideas off of and perhaps get a reality check on his own ideas once in a while. Why Raphael seems so baffled by the end result - when Kubrick goes and makes his own film, as he always did, with the end product bearing maybe 20% of Raphael's influence - remains an utter mystery.

What is most objectionable about the book, though, is the passive-aggressively deflationary tone it takes against Kubrick, Raphael relishing every opportunity to cut the Emperor down to size for no good reason. When Kubrick dies, Raphael scoffs - in the last sentence of the book, no less - with a pithy one-liner about sometimes giants not really being immortal, or somesuch. It's downright shameful, and leaves a bitter aftertaste following what was already a troubling and exploitative piece.

Oscar Leal says

3 Estrellas xxx

Me siento un tanto defraudado, molesto, decepcionado. Lo que le han hecho a este libro es una completa falta de respeto. La traducción ha arruinado algo para hacerlo una clase de clickbait literario . Titular un libro para nosotros los hispanohablantes como "Aquí Kubrick" con el director de cine en portada y una sinopsis que da a entender que conoceremos sus aficiones, secretos e inspiraciones más profundas hace replantear muchas cosas. Los que tenían a cargo los derechos de esta obra seguramente pensaron en vender, el título original es "Eyes Wide Open: A Memoir of Stanley Kubrick" Que va de eso, una experiencia cinematográfica con Kubrick de por medio en la grabación de aquella película con el guionista de por medio.

Sinopsis: De todo era sabido, Kubrick era un misántropo. Se negaba a volar y a circular a mas de cuarenta kilómetros por hora. Procuraba en lo posible que no se le tomaran fotografías y vivía aterrorizado con la idea de ser asesinado. Ejercía relaciones de poder con todos aquellos que se cruzaban en su camino. Como

cineasta estaba obsesionado con la perfección. Insistía en tener el control absoluto de todos y cada uno de los aspectos del proceso. Escenas sencillas requerían mas de cien tomas. No es extraño que solo hiciera seis películas en los últimos treinta y cinco años.

Los recuentos anecdóticos contados por el guionista se siente como la autofelación más grande que he leído en un libro, una serie de remembranzas siempre alaban su propia grandeza como alguien pretencioso; Pero a pesar de ello puedo destacar varias cosas. El proceso de creación de Kubrick, algunas curiosidades interesantes dentro de su psicología, experiencia de primera mano, Frederic Raphael nos pone en situación cómo es que se vive en el mundo del espectáculo y lo que conlleva ser un guionista. También nos abre los ojos de que Kubrick es un genio, pero no el genio que creemos que es. Todo es una discusión de creatividad, pero se queda bastante corto a lo que el material daba.

Bryan says

I interlibrary loaned this book on a whim after reading a quote from it in another text. When this book arrived a week later, I forgot what the quote was or why I wanted to read this book.

But alas, I love Stanley as much as the next guy and I dived right in.

It is basically a personal diary of Raphael's cordial but contentious relationship with Kubrick after K. solicited him to write the script for a then unnamed project that would become *Eyes Wide Shut*. Peter Christopherson once said that *anyone* who has *anything* to do with Hollywood is a complete wanker. This more or less proves true in this text, even of talents like K. and R. The process through which a high dollar film is produced is absurd enough to drive most the 99% to armed robbery. Despite these arbitrary machinations, K. does eventually coerce R. into slavishly building a script piece by piece without K. ever showing his thematic intentions or giving up the power of his hand as producer.

R. ends up wondering if a year of his life had been wasted, not being sure the film would even be made after so long at the beck and call of K. The rest is history.

R. is a polyglot. He possesses old school elite education and old world sense of language. Even his personal reminiscences are smoothly rendered with an artisan's hand. (mixed metaphor?) It kind of makes me want to read his novels.

Obviously, this book is really only for scholars or hardcore K. or R. fans. How many people have you heard say "I'm a hardcore Frederick Raphael fan!?" Hahahahahaha. R. is a different universe than those kind of people. Though you will find out what it is like to work with K., you really won't find out what any of K.'s thought processes were during the production.

Monty says

fredric raphael is a self aggrandizing windbag.
