

## **2001 A Space Odyssey - Stanley Kubrick**

### **Ann-Margret "Maggie" Yonan 1990**

Stanley Kubrick's film, 2001: A Space Odyssey is based on Arthur C. Clark's brilliant short story, the Sentinel. As a director, Kubrick is profound, visionary and an astounding film-maker. The film is a tremendous visual experience, containing spectacular imagery about what space might look like, and is more special effects than verbal dialogue. We are left to experience the non-verbal, mystical vastness of the film, and to subjectively reach into our own subconscious and into the film's pure imagery to speculate about its meaning. While some of it is considered long, monotonous and boring, it inspires us to look at how man is dwarfed by technology and space.

The first spoken word is almost a half hour into the film. Much of the film is in dead silence, depicting the absence of sound in space, or with the sound of human breathing within a spacesuit. All scenes in the film have either dialogue or music (or silence), but never both together. The film's opening overture, Ligeti's Atmospheres, signifies a pre-creation era, or the mysterious unknown time of the universe's birth. In the opening visual image, the camera pans upward from the pock-marked surface of the Moon in the foreground. The perspective is from behind the moon. In the distance is a view of the Sun rising over the Earth, a crescent in the vastness of space. The image shows the heavenly bodies of the Earth, Moon, and Sun in a vertically-symmetrical alignment.

The evolution theme is predominant in all three main segments of the film: The dawn of man, in which a primeval ape man makes a breakthrough, discovering a tool/weapon with which to survive, and becoming endowed with intelligence after experiencing a mysterious black monolith. In a millisecond, Kubrick takes us into millions of years later to the Lunar Journey and sets us in motion through the symbolic wheel of life, where man is space-traveling but still complacent and primitive in his habits and thoughts until a similar monolith is discovered on the lunar surface in the 21st century, sending its signals to Jupiter. This leads us to the Jupiter Mission, a futuristic, 18-month journey where man questions his reliance on technology and his complacency and is forced to make a life-altering decision to survive by sheer ingenuity and creativity.

The end result of the space odyssey is not a greater and more infallible machine, but a greater, more fully-realized being produced in a second childhood. The cyclical evolution from ape to man to spaceman to angel-starchild-superman is complete. Evolution has been outwardly directed toward another level of existence: From isolated cave dwellings to the entire Earth to the Moon to the Solar System to the Universe. Humankind's unfathomed potential for the future is hopeful and optimistic, even though HAL had momentarily threatened the evolution of humanity.

Kubrick's 2001 gives us the technology of inspiration by which we can travel great distances, in time and space, in their unity and multiplicity, and finally meet our true self: The artist!

Our quest yesterday, today and forever is to find the God within.