

Emilio D'Alessandro with Filippo Ulivieri, Stanley Kubrick and Me: Thirty Years at His Side. Translated by Simon Marsh. New York: Arcade Publishing, 2016

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Emilio D'Alessandro with Filippo Ulivieri, *Stanley Kubrick and Me: Thirty Years at His Side*. Translated by Simon Marsh. New York: Arcade Publishing, 2016

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Given the wealth of scholarship on Stanley Kubrick, there are surprisingly few biographies of him. So far, we have Vincent LoBrutto's excellently researched tome. That was followed by Stanley Baxter's less-extensively researched book, one which relied heavily on interviews, and which took a much more jaundiced approach than LoBrutto's. Neither author benefited from the voluminous material located at the Stanley Kubrick Archive at the University of the Arts in London. There has also been various memoirs from his screenwriting collaborators, including Diane Johnson, Michael Herr and, most controversially, Frederic Raphael. However, apart from the odd interview and essay, we have never had a full-blown account from anyone within the inner Kubrick circle – that constellation of individuals who were located closest to the director. This includes those who were given space on Kubrick's sprawling estate at Childwickbury – Jan Harlan, Tony Frewin, Leon Vitali and, of course, his wife and family. But, with the arrival of Emilio D'Alessandro's memoir, *Stanley and Me*, and *Filmworker* (dir. Tony Zierra, 2017), a documentary about Vitali, we now have two different, yet invaluable, perspectives on Kubrick, perspectives from some of those who were closest to him.

D'Alessandro was Kubrick's driver and handyman for many years. He began working for Kubrick during the production of *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) and stayed with him through to the director's death in 1999. D'Alessandro provides a rare and refreshing point of view. His memoir is very informative, giving details and insights into Kubrick that we would not have acquired from elsewhere. His recounting of the *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999) shoot, for example, provides an invaluable skeleton on which to hang other information gleaned from interviews and the archives and elsewhere.

Emilio, for want of a better word, comes across as a 'simple' man. In a way, I would compare him to Danny Torrance (Danny Lloyd) in *The Shining* (1980) in that he provides a naïve, un-blemished, almost childlike, view of the world. As a consequence, we receive a less guarded view of events. This produces a Catch-22 for the reader: while one yearns for a more detailed, nuanced, analytic, critical account of events, if Emilio was that kind of person he would have provided less detail and hence less insight.

By contrast, *Filmworker* is not a memoir. Its director Tony Zierra spent three years with Leon Vitali, interviewing him, his family, and many others who worked with him and Kubrick, including Warner Brothers executives,

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Ryan O'Neal, Danny Lloyd *inter alia*. The result is mixed and for the Kubrick aficionados, disappointing, because it appears as if the filmmakers never realized what a goldmine Vitali is. Vitali was part of Kubrick's innermost circle. As the film makes clear, and this is reinforced by my own interviews, even though Leon only worked on four films, he became Kubrick's representative on Earth – his eyes, ears, mouth, and face. He is the skeleton key to understanding Kubrick and his films, in particular *Eyes Wide Shut*. But one feels as though none of this was really probed. One shot depicts the reams of material Vitali still personally possesses yet none of it is explored. Perhaps this the fault of the medium: with only 90 minutes to play and a general audience to satisfy, how much detail can be provided?

In light of this failure, the first hour of the film was underwhelming and it only really became interesting during its final 30 minutes. Furthermore, Zierra seems to suggest that Leon replaced his abusive father with a surrogate in the form of Kubrick and Vitali is depicted as a sad, sidelined pathetic, burned out, and clingy figure who sacrificed his career, children, and presumably marriages (although his partners are never mentioned) for Stanley. It either suggests Stanley was exploitative or that Leon was devoted, or a mixture of both.

Vitali and D'Alessandro provide revealing contrasts. Both worked for Stanley for a long time. Both appeared in *Eyes Wide Shut* as Red Cloak and an uncredited newspaper vendor respectively. But where Emilio was able to break away and to leave Kubrick when he needed to, Leon never did. Although they both worked long hours for Stanley, time which took them away from their families, Emilio attended to them while it seems Leon was guilty of neglect. But perhaps these perspectives owe to the media in which their experiences are narrated: Emilio told his to Filippo Olivieri and hence retained some control while Leon presumably had no say over Zierra's final cut.

Nonetheless, taken together, these two accounts are essential sources of information on this notoriously private director, and both book and film will appeal to scholars and fans alike. All that is missing now is that one big biography that takes all of this, as well as the archives, into account.