

Movie starts tonight at the Odeon

# Barry Lyndon could be the greatest historical film ever made

by Terry Dupuis  
Stanley Kubrick is one of the most controversial and unpredictable filmmakers of our time. He is probably the most painstaking craftsman the cinema has ever seen. Naturally his output has been small, since he spends several years on each film project. In 20 years he has directed only 7 movies. But all of them have aroused considerable controversy at the time of their release and seem to withstand the test of time, gaining in stature on repeated viewings.

Paths of Glory (1957) is one of the finest indictments of war ever produced. Spartacus (1960) holds up as one of the most intelligent of all the big screen spectacles. Lolita (1962), a rather strange comedy, seemed to me to be something of a misfire on Kubrick's part, but it too has its defenders. But Kubrick's next project, Dr. Strangelove (1964) was a biting satirical comedy on the nuclear age and was one of the definitive films of the 1960's. Four years later came 2001: A Space Odyssey (1968), arguably the greatest of all science-fiction movies. Kubrick followed this up with A Clockwork Orange (1971), resulting in one of the most controversial films of the 70's.

Now the unpredictable and brilliant Kubrick has turned his camera from the futuristic setting of his last three films to focus upon the 18th Century for his latest project, Barry Lyndon, which is now playing at the Odeon Theatre in Midland. Barry Lyndon, based on a novel by 19th Century writer William Thackeray, is a three hour historical epic starring Ryan O'Neal in the title role. Long awaited as a motion picture event, it has succeeded in stirring up as much controversy

among the critics as anything else Kubrick has ever done. Critics have been sharply divided as to the film's merits. Barry Lyndon has its share of critical detractors, but I count myself among its admirers, along with Clyde Gilmour, William K. Everson, Clive Denton and many other critics who consider Kubrick's latest film to be a masterpiece, a movie milestone and a rich and rewarding viewing experience.

In my opinion Barry Lyndon is not only Kubrick's greatest achievement to date, it is also the best historical film ever made and one of the major artistic triumphs in the history of the movies.

Never before have I seen a movie which so completely and vividly recreates a previous century. Barry Lyndon carries us back totally to the 18th Century, in recounting the fortunes of an Irish rogue and gambler who cheats and schemes his way into the upper English class.

Kubrick's exquisite photographic style is remarkable and deservedly won an Academy Award. To take just one example of Kubrick's innovations for this film: Barry Lyndon takes place in an age in which the main source of indoor lighting was candles. So for his film Kubrick developed a special lens which would enable him to photograph scenes using only the candlelight available in the room. This has always been impossible in movies of the past, where artificial lighting has always been necessary and has often made a lot of historical films seem phony.

The costumes and sets in Barry Lyndon also won Academy Awards and they help to contribute greatly to the authenticity of the atmosphere which Kubrick creates in his film. Special mention should also be made of the music in Barry Lyndon. Music usually is an important aspect of any Kubrick film and his latest is no exception. The music in Barry Lyndon is all authentic 18th Century, ranging from the classical works of Handel, Schubert and Mozart to traditional melodies and military marches of the period. To match its visual and photographic splendour, Barry Lyndon has one of the most beautiful soundtracks ever. Not surprisingly the movie won its fourth Academy Award for its striking musical adaptations.

As William K. Everson, the noted film critic and historian, commented in the February edition of "Films in Review":

"Barry Lyndon is a work of consummate craftsmanship, and one with a notably civilized stance, ingredients rare in movies today."

Barry Lyndon opens tonight at the Odeon Theatre in Midland, where it is scheduled to run for one week. Due to the film's length, there will be only one performance nightly.

Footnote: Considering the wide variety of response with which Barry Lyndon has been met by both critics and the movie-going public, I would be extremely interested in getting the opinions of moviegoers in the Georgian Bay area who have seen Kubrick's latest film. So if any readers who see the movie wish to express their opinion of it, they can write to me c/o The Midland Times, or send me their letters directly to Box 915, Penetang. You can simply write one word which summarizes your opinion of the film Barry Lyndon, e.g., "brilliant", "boring", "beautiful", "crummy".

responses, I'll print the most interesting readers' write-ups in a future column.

Playing elsewhere in the coming week

A good family double bill begins tomorrow for three evenings at the Pen Theatre: The Bad News Bears and Won Ton Ton.

Another good double feature begins tonight at the drive-in in Midland for 4 evenings: Blazing Saddles and Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore.

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