

# A Commentary on *Dr. Strangelove*

by Brian Siano

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## Introduction

*Dr. Strangelove, or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* is a black comedy about nuclear war. Kubrick's original intention was to make a straight thriller about a possible nuclear "accident," and, as is his customary method, he began researching the topic in earnest -- subscribing to *Aviation Week* and the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, conferring with NATO officials, etc. According to Kubrick:

"I started out being completely unfamiliar with any of the professional literature in the field of nuclear deterrence. I was at first very impressed with how subtle some of the work was -- at least so it seemed starting out with just a primitive concern for survival and a total lack of any ideas of my own. Gradually I became aware of the almost wholly paradoxical nature of deterrence or, as it has been described, the Delicate Balance of Terror. If you are weak, you may invite a first strike. If you are becoming too strong, you may provoke a pre-emptive strike. If you try to maintain the delicate balance, it's almost impossible to do so mainly because secrecy prevents you from knowing what the other side is doing, and vice versa, ad infinitum..."

According to Alexander Walker, Kubrick asked Alistair Buchan, head of the Institute for Strategic Studies, to recommend some worthwhile fiction on the subject. Buchan recommended a novel titled *Red Alert* by an RAF navigator named Peter George.

*Red Alert* (published in England as *Two Hours to Doom*, and also published under the pen name "Peter Bryant") is easily recognizable as the template for *Strangelove*. The book takes place in three separate, isolated locations (the War Room, Sonor Air Force Base, and the B-52 bomber "Alabama Angel"), and it explains in detail how a nuclear war could happen by accident. In the novel, General Quinten, who is dying of a terminal disease, orders his planes to attack Russia; he also debates his actions with his executive officer, Major Howard, rationally and coolly. At the end of the novel, the one bomb that does get dropped on Russia doesn't detonate fully, and the superpowers enact a rapid detente.

As Kubrick began working on a script, his ideas began to change. The following are culled from two separate quotes from Kubrick (Walker, p.34, and Nelson, p.81), but I believe I've assembled them in a fair and accurate manner:

"As I tried to build the detail for a scene I found myself tossing away what seemed to me to be very truthful insights because I was afraid the audience would laugh. After a few weeks of this I realized that these incongruous bits of reality were closer to the truth than anything else I was able to imagine. After all, what could be more absurd than the very idea of two mega-powers willing to wipe out all human life because of an accident, spiced up by political differences that will seem as meaningless to people a hundred years from now as the theological conflicts of the Middle Ages appear to us today?"

"And it was at this point I decided to treat the story as a nightmare comedy. Following this approach, I found it never interfered with presenting well-reasoned arguments. In culling the incongruous, it seemed to me to be less stylized and more realistic than any so-called serious, realistic treatment, which in fact is more stylized than life itself by its careful exclusion of the banal, the absurd, and the incongruous. In the context of impending world destruction, hypocrisy, misunderstanding, lechery, paranoia, ambition, euphemism, patriotism, heroism, and even reasonableness can evoke a grisly laugh."

After writing at least one draft of the script as a comedy -- this draft can be found as part of the Voyager-Criterion's laserdisc supplement -- Kubrick brought in comic novelist Terry Southern to polish the script. More contributions were made on-set by the actors, especially Peter Sellers.

(Most versions of the film include a disclaimer at the very beginning, where the Air Force states that the events that occur in the film could not happen. This disclaimer does *not* appear on the Voyager-Criterion laserdisc, which is the only video version approved personally by Stanley Kubrick.)

## What happens, is....

The opening shot of *Dr. Strangelove* shows a set of mountain peaks above a plain of clouds. A narrator's voice tells us of the Soviet Union's mysterious military activities, quite possibly the construction of a "Doomsday Device," "below the arctic peaks of the Zhokov Islands." We then see the titles of the film, superimposed over footage of two B-52s refueling in flight. The soundtrack plays a Muzak version of "Try a Little Tenderness."

At Burpelson Air Force Base, Group Captain Lionel Mandrake (Peter Sellers), an RAF officer assigned to an American base, receives a phone call from the base commander, General Jack D. Ripper. Ripper (Sterling Hayden) tells Mandrake that a "shooting war" has just started.

"Oh, hell," Mandrake says. "Are the Russians involved, sir?"

Ripper gives Mandrake his instructions. Mandrake is to transmit the Go code, "R for Robert," to the B-52 planes which are holding at their fail-safe points. Mandrake is also to have all personal radios on the base impounded, and to have the base "sealed tight." We hear the sirens of the base as the alert is sounded.

Cut to the B-52s. A narrator informs us that these planes, each carrying mega-tonnages of nuclear weapons, are each two hours away from their designated targets in the Soviet Union.

Inside the B-52 "Leper Colony," the crew is bored as hell -- leafing through "Playboy," shuffling cards, catnapping. Suddenly, a set of numeric codes jolts the machinery into life, and Lt. Goldberg (Paul Tamerin) checks the incoming codes. He radios the pilot, Major T.J. "King" Kong (Slim Pickens). Turns out the code he's received decodes as "Wing Attack Plan R."

Incredulous, with the crew suspecting that this is some kind of "loyalty test," Major Kong has Goldberg confirm the order while he opens the plane's safe to check the attack codes. After a moment, Goldberg reports: "Message from base confirmed." As the downstrack begins playing "When Johnny comes Marching Home," Kong puts on his Stetson hat and announces, "Well, boys, I reckon this is it; nookular combat toe-to-toe with the Rooskies."

The crew begins to prepare for their attack. Part of the procedure is that all communications to the plane are sent through a device called the "CRM-114 discriminator."

Suddenly we cut to a hotel room, where Miss Scott (Tracy Reed) -- who, oddly enough, is also the centerfold in the "Playboy" the plane's crew was reading -- is lounging across the bed. Picking it up, she says that her boss, General Turgidson, is indisposed. Turns out Turgidson's in the bathroom so she shouts the message to him: they just monitored a message out of Burpelson decoding as an attack command. Turgidson (George C. Scott) comes out of the bathroom, picks up the phone, and asks what the story is. He learns that there's nothing on the "threat board." He orders that everything get bumped up to Condition Red, tells Miss Scott that he's going to mosey over to the War Room, and that he'll be back before she can say "Blast off!"

At Burpelson Air Force base, Ripper is announcing to his men (through the P.A. system) that the Communists might attack the base at any moment, possibly even disguised as American troops. Meanwhile, Mandrake finds a small radio, snaps it on, and -- instead of hearing civil defense broadcasts -- he hears dance music.

He takes the radio to Ripper, and confronts him with this intelligence. Ripper, however, has pulled a gun on Mandrake, who now realizes that Gen. Ripper has started a nuclear war. Ripper assures Mandrake that the Joint Chiefs will now have to realize that their only course of action is "total commitment." Ripper concludes by saying that he will no longer sit back, and let the Communist Conspiracy "sap and impurity all of our precious bodily fluids."

The War Room; A gigantic, cavernous room, triangular in cross-section, with a massive map of Russia on one wall. Seated at the circular table are an assortment of generals, and President Merkin Muffley (Sellers). Muffley is being briefed by Gen. Turgidson about the situation. Turgidson nervously explains that, even though Muffley is the only

one with authority to order a nuclear strike, Ripper took advantage of a provision that allowed for lower-echelon commanders to use weapons if Washington had been obliterated. Turgidson also tells Muffley that the planes use the "CRM-114 discriminator," which, to prevent false or misleading orders from being received, is designed not to receive at all, unless the message is preceded by a three-letter code prefix. In other words, unless they can figure out which three-letter code (out of a possible 27,000) to use, they cannot recall the planes.

As Muffley realizes to what extent things are screwed up -- to put it bluntly, the systems in place to prevent an accidental war have now ensured that one will happen -- he begins to explore other avenues of action. He orders troops near Burpelson base to attack Burpelson, secure Ripper, and learn the recall code. Turgidson encourages Muffley to consider the possibility of following Ripper's attack with "an all-out and coordinated attack on their airfields and missile bases" because "we'd stand a good chance of catching'em with their pants down!" Rather than entertain Gen. Turgidson's encouragement to mass murder, President Muffley orders that the Russian Ambassador be brought to the War Room.

In the meantime, the crew of the B-52 is going through their packet of survival rations.

When Ambassador DeSadesky (Peter Bull) arrives, Gen. Turgidson is suspicious that he will be trying to snare some state secrets. The President's aide is trying to get Premier Kissov on the Hot line: De Sadesky tells them to try an unlisted number, because "the Premier is a man of the people, but he is also a man, if you take my meaning." As the number is being tried, Turgidson catches DeSadesky in the act of taking pictures of the Big Board with a miniature camera. As they wrestle, the President breaks them up by saying, "Gentlemen, you can't fight in here. This is the War Room!"

At Burpelson, a convoy of American troops is nearing the base. Ripper's soldiers, believing that they are going to fight Russians disguised as Americans, open fire, and the battle begins. In Ripper's office, Mandrake -- terrified -- hears the distant gunfire.

The Russian Premier is a little drunk, so President Muffley has to talk to him as if he's a small child -- and explain to him that one of our generals "went a little funny in the head," and "went and did a funny thing." After calming the Premier down, Muffley explains that they will turn over all known attack plans to the Soviets to help them in shooting down the planes -- probably the best way to avoid an all-out holocaust. DeSadesky gets on the line, and after a few words in Russian, hangs up. "The fools. The mad fools." he says, his voice echoing ominously, "The Doomsday Machine."

At Burpelson, Ripper sits down next to Mandrake, and explains why he sent his planes to attack Russia; he blames about of sexual impotence on water fluoridation, which he claims is a Communist plot to sap and impurify, etc., etc. As the depth of Ripper's psychosis sinks in to Mandrake, a burst of gunfire blows in the windows to Ripper's office.

At the War Room, DeSadesky explains that the Doomsday Device is a machine that will kill all human and animal life on Earth, and render the Earth as dead as the Moon for ninety-three years. is a nuclear weapon is detonated on Russia -- it was a lot cheaper than maintaining an army's worth of nuclear deterrents. It's at this point that Muffley consults with his nuclear deterrence advisor, Dr. Strangelove (Sellers).

Strangelove -- a former Nazi, now a cripple in a wheelchair coldly calculating the effects of nuclear war -- explains that such a device is certainly plausible, and perhaps even desirable as the ultimate deterrent. (He also explains that the point is lost if the Russians keep it a secret; DeSadesky lamely replies that it was to be announced that Monday.)

Meanwhile, it looks as though Ripper's soldiers have lost at Burpelson. While Mandrake tries to cajole the clearly deranged Ripper into telling him the recall code, Ripper calmly goes into the washroom and shoots himself.

The B-52 is having problems of its own. They pick up a Russian missile on radar, and even though they try evasive action, the missile explodes close enough to the plane to send it into a tailspin. The crew manage to save themselves, and the plane continues on its course.

Mandrake is puzzling over the doodles Ripper left on his desk-- various crossword-like permutations of "Peace on Earth" and "purity of essence." The leader of the attack force, Col. "Bat" Guano (Keenan Wynn) shoots his way in,

and takes Mandrake prisoner. Mandrake pleads to be put in touch with the President, because he's convinced that the recall code must be a variant of the "POE" pattern. Guano, however, suspects Mandrake of being some kind of "deviated pervert." Eventually, Mandrake convinces Guano to let him use a pay phone to call the President; Guano has to shoot the lock off a Coke machine to get the necessary change.

The B-52 is taking stock of itself. They have sustained a lot of fuel loss, and it looks as though they're not going to be able to return from their initial bombing target at Lapuda. Also, the CRM-114 unit is damaged.

The War Room is suddenly jubilant that the recall code OPE was successful in recalling the planes. This suddenly turns to horror as the Soviets report that one plane -- previously thought downed -- is still on its way to its target. Although Turgidson suspects a trick -- and he can barely contain his excitement that the plane might succeed -- the President tells the Soviets to put all of their resources into defending Laputa, the plane's primary target.

Meanwhile, the B-52's crew has re-evaluated its situation; they don't have enough fuel to make it to the primary target. Instead, Major Kong has his crew find another target that they can reach, at least. As they approach the target, they realize that the bomb bay doors are malfunctioning. Major Kong goes down, sits astride one of the bombs, and rewires the door circuitry. Finally, they reach the target, and drop the bomb -- with Major Kong still sitting on it, shrieking a wild rodeo yell into oblivion.

In the War Room, Strangelove explains that perhaps not all is lost. A nucleus of human specimens could be kept in our deeper mine shafts. Greenhouses can grow food, and animals can be bred and slaughtered. And, in order to ensure that humankind will continue, a ration of "ten females to each male" should be maintained, with the females being of a "highly stimulating nature," and the presence of the Joint Chiefs being a necessity. Even DeSadesky appreciates the idea, and as Turgidson demands that we continue to stockpile nuclear weapons for when we emerge, DeSadesky walks quietly away -- taking pictures with a hidden camera. And as Turgidson reaches a climax, demanding that we must not allow a "mine-shaft gap," Strangelove staggers from his wheelchair: "I have a plan... Mein Fuhrer! I can WALK!"

And a chorus of atom bomb explosions follows, matching a recording of Vera Lynn singing, "We'll meet again...don't know where, don't know when....But I know we'll meet again some sunny day."

### ***Strangelove* and Scripting Credit**

As was said before, credit for the film belongs to many people. Peter George wrote the original story (and after the film was released, he wrote a comic novelization based on the shooting script). Kubrick recognized its comic potential. Terry Southern added a great deal to Kubrick's comic script, and by most reports, many of the best lines were improvised by Peter Sellers. (The phone conversation with the Russian Premier, as kind of a ghastly Bob Newhart routine, was Sellers' invention.) In a *Playboy* interview, George C. Scott claims that the entire cast should have gotten screenplay credit, and that Kubrick had the wildest sense of humor of anyone he'd ever met.

An early draft of the script -- written by Kubrick, before Southern was brought in -- can be read frame-by-frame on the Voyager-Criterion laserdisc. In this early draft, the film is presented as a recovered record found by aliens on a dead planet called Earth. (The opening credits describe a "Micro-Galaxy-Meteor" logo with a squalling alien head. Amusing, in light of the stylized MGM logo used in *2001*.) This script is clearly less than the final product; a great deal of the final film's better lines clearly came from Southern's later contributions, including General Ripper's "bodily fluids" obsessions. Although there is a character named Turgidson, a character named "Buck" Schmuck gets most of what eventually wound up as Turgidson dialogue. (Interesting note: in this early script, one General is named "Toejam." So is a Marine in *Full Metal Jacket*.)

It's a certain bet that the character of Major Kong can be attributed to Terry Southern, who's a pretty ebullient Texan on his own. To give Southern his due: His later screenwriting work on *The Loved One* shows flashes of *Strangelove*-like dark comedy, especially in the scenes where Robert Morse inspects the funeral home and is shown the tricks of the undertakers' craft, but the film as a whole is a mess. IMHO, Southern should be not be disregarded simply because we like Kubrick a lot.

## What about the pie fight?

Originally, Kubrick had shot a lengthy and expensive pie fight sequence -- the scene where the Russian ambassador is inquiring about Havana cigars indicates where the pies came from. Various accounts have the sequence ending with the President and the premier making pie-castles like little children. Michael Ciment's book *Kubrick* includes some lovely photographs of this missing sequence.

So where is it? According to *most* sources, Kubrick decided that it didn't make sense to escalate from pie fights to nuclear holocausts. Another version of the story has it that the Kennedy assassination nixed the idea; in one scene, the President is struck full-face with a pie, and falls into Turgidson's arms. Turgidson's line at that point would have been, "Gentlemen, our President has been struck down in his prime." This would have been extremely tasteless after the shooting in Dallas. (Note: Alexander Walker claims that Kubrick had already cut the scene by the time of the assassination.)

Another portion of the film was changed because of the assassination: as the B-52 crew goes through its survival pack, Major Kong's line is "Shoot, a fellow could have a pretty good weekend in Vegas with ala that stuff." He originally had said "Dallas," and the line was re-looped.

But as for finding the legendary Pie Fight sequence? It's extremely unlikely. But we can always hope...

## Just who is Dr. Strangelove, really?

Strangelove is such a potent character -- twisted, coldly rational, his mechanical arm likely to spring into a *Seig Heil* at the slightest provocation -- that many people have speculated on who Strangelove might be "based" on.

At one point in the film, Turgidson asks if "Strangelove" is a "Kraut" name. Stains, Muffley's assistant, reports that it had been changed from "Merkwerdichliebe." I checked the syllables against a German dictionary back in high school, and came out with "strange-love" (merwerdich-liebe).

Nelson reports that the name is actually "Merkwuerdigichliebe," which translates into "cherished fate."

Several critics have found similarities to Strangelove in the character Rotwang in Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*. Rotwang is a mad scientist with a mechanical hand who brings down ruin on nearly everyone. Kubrick has disavowed any intentional similarities.

But anyway, there are several major guesses as to who provided the basis for Strangelove. The favorite seems to be Henry Kissinger, a former Harvard professor who served as Secretary of State for Presidents Nixon and Ford. At the time of *Strangelove's* production, Kissinger was at Harvard, and had written at least two books on nuclear war by 1960. (One was published by the Council on Foreign Relations, and was a Book-of-the-Month selection.) In his books, Kissinger argued for various "strategies," including limited nuclear war, tactical nuclear weapons, etc.

The case *for* Kissinger: he's German by birth, and the accent is very similar, which seems to be the main reason for linking Kissinger with Strangelove. Kissinger's subsequent career -- which journalist Christopher Hitchens compared to the pathology of a serial killer -- certainly matches Strangelove's ruthlessness. (Suggested reading: Seymour Hersh's *The Price Of Power*.) And given Kissinger's minor prominence and Kubrick's thorough research, one could argue it's likely that Kubrick thought of Kissinger.

The case *against* Kissinger: In my opinion he was far too obscure a figure to be "parodied." One would want to parody a widely-known personage, and at the time, Kissinger was one of many theorists of the unthinkable.

The second favorite is clearly Werner von Braun, the former Nazi rocket scientist who quickly turned his services (and those of his underlings) to the U.S. after the war. In the Cold War, von Braun's expertise in rocketry was more important to the U.S. than prosecuting him for administering slave labor at Peenemunde and Nordhausen. His books were written with a view to the future (*I Aim For The Stars*), but it was a theme in humor at the time to note Von Braun's earlier work (cf. Tom Lehrer's song about him, Mort Sahl's subtitle to his book ". . . but Sometimes I Hit London.")

The case *for* Von Braun: He was famous. He was German. He had been a faithful Nazi. He promoted a self-image of coldly rational theorization of pragmatic scientific realities, untempered by such human issues as compassion, morals, or values.

The case *against* Von Braun: Very little, apart from the fact that he wasn't a nuclear scientist, nor a theorist of nuclear deterrence.

A third runner-up is Edward Teller, the Hungarian physicist who worked on the atomic bomb at Los Alamos, and whose theoretical work was instrumental in developing the H-bomb. Teller was also willing to denounce Robert Oppenheimer as a security risk, thus ensuring his reputation among liberals as a scoundrel. He was also the man who convinced Ronald Reagan that the Strategic Defense Initiative was a workable concept. Even historian William Manchester, in the Oppenheimer passages in *The Glory And The Dream*, said that, eventually, Teller would be savagely parodied as *Dr. Strangelove*.

The case *for* Teller; His role in the Oppenheimer affair. His promotion of the development of the H-bomb. His continued role in promoting nuclear weapons development (he was the head of Lawrence Livermore labs for many years). He had a foreign accent that, to an untrained ear, might sound German.

The case *against* Teller; Teller was Hungarian, and *fled* the Nazis they overran his country.

I think the best case can be made that Herman Kahn was the best source for Strangelove. Kahn was one of the earliest employees at the Rand Corporation, which had been set by Gen. "Hap" Arnold to study nuclear war. According to *The Wizards Of Armageddon* by Fred Kaplan, Kahn was notable for developing the linguistic trick of referring to potential casualties with the "only" word, as in "only two million killed." "Alluding almost casually to 'only' two million dead was part of the image Kahn was fashioning for himself, the living portrait of the ultimate defense intellectual, cool and fearless, asking the questions everyone else ignored, thinking about the unthinkable." Indeed, his book *On Thermonuclear War* (1960), *Scientific American* reviewed it as "a moral tract on mass murder; how to plan it, how to commit it, how to get away with it, how to justify it."

The case *for* Kahn: Dr. Strangelove himself refers to a study he commissioned from the "Bland Corporation," a clear play on Kahn's old haunts. The similarity to Kahn's own ideas in Strangelove's pronouncements -- including the mine-shaft and ten-females-to-each-male stuff -- is uncannily similar to Kahn's brand of futurism. And since Kahn was the most famous nuclear war theorist at the time, Kubrick must have been thinking of his work.

The case *against* Kahn: Kahn, despite his name, was American-born, and was never a Nazi. Kahn was once asked about *Strangelove*, and his reply was: "Dr. Strangelove would not have lasted three weeks at the Pentagon... he was too creative."

My Best Guess is that Kubrick wanted to satirize the works of nuclear intellectuals such as Herman Kahn. Kahn was clearly the most famous, though it is not inconceivable that Kubrick was aware of Kissinger's work in the field. In order to give an extra spin on the ultra-rational, "pragmatic" pose, Kubrick added allusions to Von Braun's Nazi past. The wheelchair and the physical infirmities were added to give Strangelove a bizarre, grotesque appearance. But personally, I believe that Herman Kahn was the single greatest influence on the creation of Dr. Strangelove.

### **Where 'Strangelove' fits, in terms of history and comedy**

Strangelove is not without precedent; in fact the film is one of the best examples of a brand of humor designated, by Tony Hendra, as "Boomer humor." It's a vein of humor that takes a strong antiestablishment stance, frequently with a very dark or "black" tone, and usually raises very unsettling questions about modern life.

Hendra's historical study of this humor, *Going Too Far*, is well-worth searching for. It's entertaining, witty, fairly comprehensive (Hendra acknowledges that there are large gaps in his narrative), and written with a real feel for this style of humor. (Hendra himself had been part of a comedy team that, oddly enough, had been present at both of Lenny Bruce's arrests; he was later an editor at the *National Lampoon*, and is probably best known for playing manager Ian Faith in *This Is Spinal Tap*.)

Early exemplars were Mort Sahl, Jules Feiffer and Lenny Bruce. (A poster for a Bruce show can be seen in *The Killing*). Bruce and Southern were close friends; according to Hendra, Southern and Bruce were together when Kennedy was assassinated, trying to develop the right statement about such a horrifying moment.

The form went through many changes. There was repertory-company comedy, as in the Second City and Committee groups; stand-up comics such as George Carlin, Dick Gregory, and Woody Allen; films such as *Little Murders*, *Dr. Strangelove*, and *MASH*; novels such as *Catch-22* and Thomas Pynchon's *V*; and probably in its finest form, the magazine *The National Lampoon*, circa 1970-1975.

Other historians hunt down an anthology titled *Black Comedy*, edited by Bruce Jay Friedman. (His son is notoriously funny cartoonist Drew Friedman.) This anthology, presenting the best of a growing school of humor writing, contains samples by Feiffer, Southern, Pynchon, Heller, and many others.

Seen in this context, *Dr. Strangelove* can be appreciated as one of the purest examples of a wonderful school of humor.

### **A few details....**

The film is full of tiny jokes and references, mostly sexual in nature. The names of many characters are derived from various sex references and ornaments:

*President Merkin Muffley:*

Merkins and muffleys are reported, variously, as pubic hair wigs.

*General Jack D. Ripper:*

Named after Jack the Ripper, England's most notorious murder of women.

*General "Buck" Turgidson:*

"Buck" may carry its slang meaning here; "Turgid" means "swollen."

*Group Captain Lionel Mandrake:*

A "mandrake root" was a plant reported to restore sexual potency.

*Col. "Bat" Guano:*

"Guano" is "shit."

*Miss Scott:*

No jokes here, but this seemed like the best place to mention that Tracy Reed, the actress in this role, was the daughter of the British director Sir Carol Reed (*The Third Man*, *Our Man in Havana*, and the film that beat *2001* for the Oscar, *Oliver!*).

*Ambassador deSadesky:*

Named after the Marquis de Sade, sybarite, sexual athlete, poet and namesake of the practice of sexual "sade-ism," i.e, inflicting pain on one's lover.

*Premier Kissov:*

"Kiss-off."

*The Bombs:*

They have the words "Dear John" and "Hi There" scrawled on them. (In George's novelization, one of the bombs is nicknamed "Lolita.")

The primary target of the B-52, "Laputa" can be read as either Spanish for "whore," or the floating island in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*.

The set design was by Ken Adam, who also made his reputation designing many of the sets for the James Bond films. The two most notable sets are the B-52 interior and the War Room.

The B-52 interior was classified at the time of the film's production. But apparently, Kubrick's researches found a photo of the interior published in a British aviation magazine, and the end result was the extremely accurate set we see in the final film. (Ridley Scott screened the film for his crew when designing the spaceship sets for *Alien*, saying he wanted that claustrophobic feeling where the machinery's coming at you.)

The War Room set was triangular in shape because Kubrick felt that such a space was probably best able to withstand an atomic explosion directly above it. Several critics have noticed the motif of games in the room -- the resemblance of the Big Board to a pinball game, the Joint Chiefs' table to a roulette wheel, etc.

Director of Photography was Gilbert Taylor, who used available light on the sets whenever possible; scenes in the B-52 were lit mostly with lights visible in the set, as were many of the War Room scenes. (Taylor also photographed *The Omen*, *Star Wars*, and *A Hard Day's Night*.) The scenes of the attack on Burpelson AFB were shot in orthochromatic film, to make it resemble a documentary film. (Alexander Walker also cites the use of a long-focus lens on President Muffley as similar to a documentary filmmaker eavesdropping on a summit meeting.)

Peter Seller's make-up was designed by Stuart Freeborn, who also did the ape suits in *2001*, as well as many of the cantina aliens in *Star Wars*.

The mechanical effects, including the shots of the B-52 in flight, were supervised by Wally Veevers, a premier British effects man and one of the four supervisors on *2001*.

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