



Sounds like Rain

by Virginia R. Smith



In 1985 I ordered a copy of all the audio from *2001: a Space Odyssey* on cassette tapes. Not a lot of us had VCRs back then, and even if we did, many of the tapes for rent in video stores were sold at exorbitant prices to protect the rental market, not to mention that the one or two copies of *2001* that the video store owned were often checked out! So, I resorted to listening to the audio from *2001* over and over again while I drew cartoons or did homework. And thus, was formed the foundation of my familiarity and fascination with the voice of one Mr. Douglas Rain.

And yet, after being a fan of HAL 9000 for nearly 40 years, I was recently striving to figure out why no one else can talk like him. Many have tried... and failed, except perhaps Candice Bergen who played SAL 9000 in *2010*. She did not attempt to speak in Canadian actor Douglas Rain's exact dialect or to imitate him per se, however the performance of mannerisms similar to HAL's in a female persona is studied and cohesive, making her a convincing twin. SAL is precise but never mechanical and has the same mix of intelligence, eagerness to please, apprehension, and curiosity, with a juxtaposition of warmth and detachment.



One uncredited voice actor came close in the Woody Allen Sci-fi comedy *Sleeper* (1973), even to the point of getting credit on IMDB as Douglas Rain! Rain's sons later debunked the myth. When investigating for myself, I was nearly convinced by the voice of the evil computer, which was without a doubt a parody of HAL. Whoever did the voice work could have made a fair living filling in for the reluctant Rain, who was notable for his lack of interest in being typecast as HAL, especially post-*2010*. However, Douglas Rain was not without a sense of humor concerning his most famous role.



A couple of years before he returned in early 1984 to record HAL's dialog for director Peter Hyams in *2010*, he did play HAL briefly in a 1982 skit for SCTV (Second City TV) in Toronto, a sci-fi sendup starring Rick Moranis as Merv Griffin and John Candy as Orson Welles.

I recall seeing a rerun of this when I was in college and laughing till I was in tears and then being floored when I realized HAL was actually played by... HAL! But what was it which made me so suddenly and absolutely certain? The voice recording technique used in the comedy show was different than in *2001* or *2010*, but somehow it was clear. This was without a doubt the voice of Douglas Rain!



Douglas Rain was also approached to play HAL in the famous Apple Computer commercial which aired during the Super Bowl in 1999 but declined the role. They did their best to find a replacement for Rain who was touted as a "near-flawless" impression of HAL but did not come close in my opinion. It's not enough to speak in an even tone with cool detachment or even to have a similar vocal quality. Rain's dialect is difficult to pin down.

So, what is it that makes HAL sound like HAL or, more accurately, Rain sound like Rain?



Think different.

For one thing, Douglas Rain, before beginning his career in theater, was instructed in the art of elocution from age 5! (What kind of 5-year-old kid is obsessed with speaking properly?) For another, Rain was born of Scottish immigrant parents in Winnipeg. Yet somehow, he sounds neither Scottish, British, Canadian nor American! Rain then spent his life either speaking or acting in radio, television or on the stage.

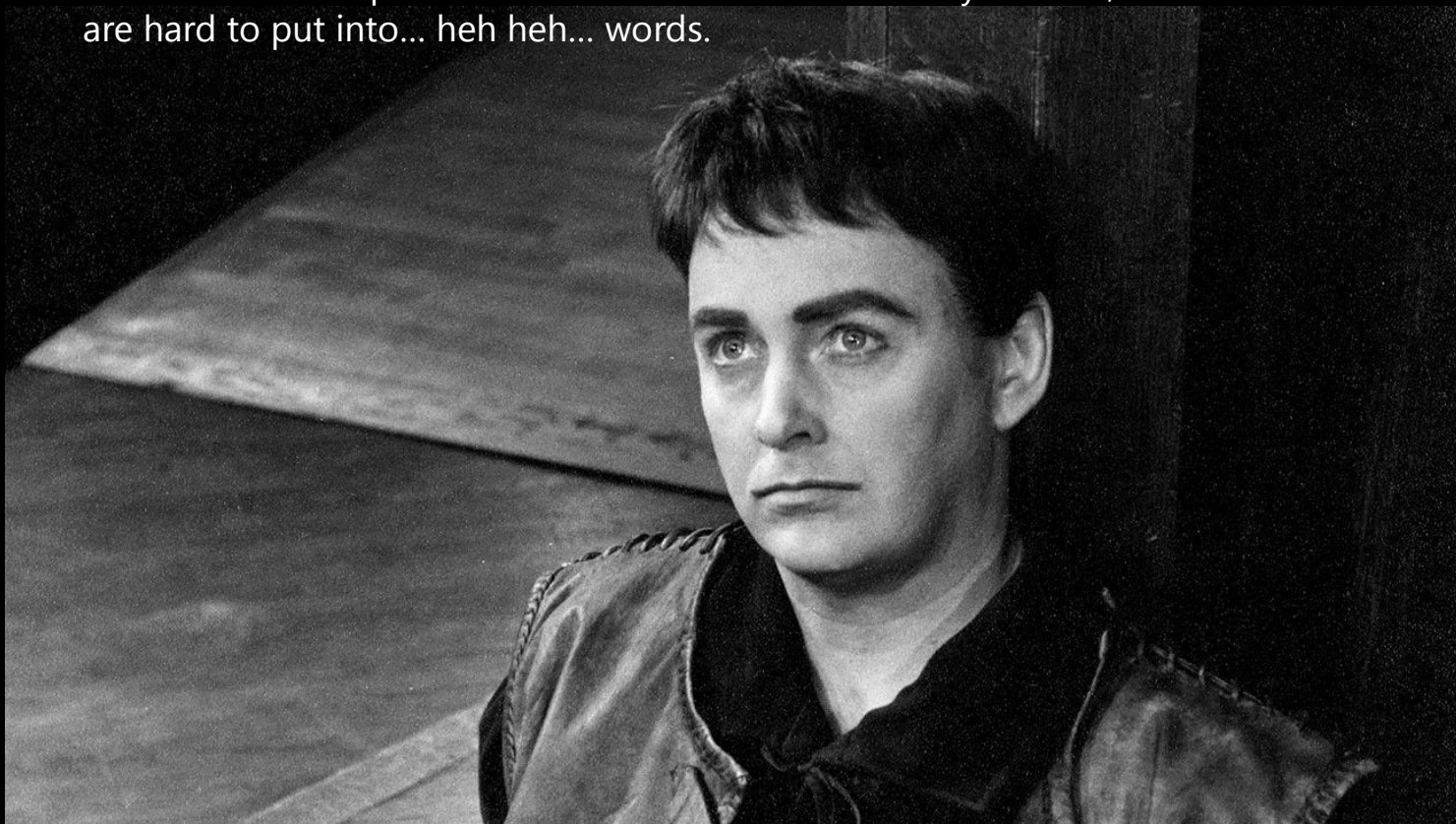
Kubrick liked Rain's narration of the Canadian documentary film *Universe* (1960) and intended to employ him as a narrator for *2001* – in addition to taking inspiration from the visual effects in the film to the point of hiring one of its effects supervisors, Wally Gentleman, in the early phase of effects production for *2001*.





Later Kubrick would cut all the narration from *2001* but retained Rain to read HAL's lines even citing his "bland" accent as being suited to the intelligent computer who has no conventional ability to express feelings. It is on this point I beg to differ with] the venerable Mr. Kubrick.

After thoughtfully considering what it is in HAL's vocal performance that makes him inimitably HAL, I discovered a wealth of details in his dialect which are exceedingly specific! Everyone who has attempted to sound like HAL in commercials and parodies lacks these distinctive idiosyncrasies, some of which are hard to put into... heh heh... words.



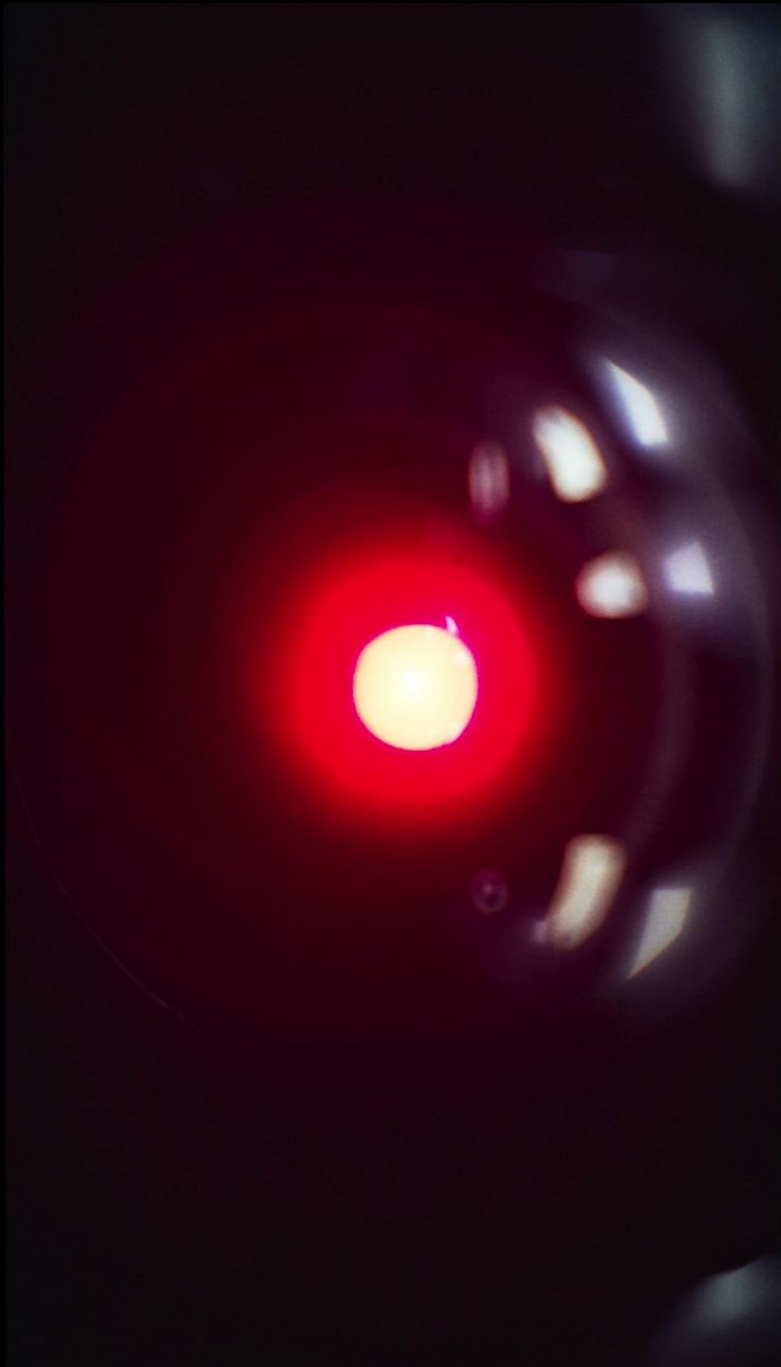
I once posted a link to the SCTV parody in a *2001* fan group on a social media platform, and a comment in response was that the voice of HAL in it was not done by Rain but sounded a lot like him. My guess is that this opinion was a response more to the recording technique rather than to how distinctively Rain speaks. For example, his pronunciation of the second "e" in a name like "Steven" (A parody of Steven Spielberg was the director of the SCTV Merv Griffin special). Instead of a short "e" it sounded more like "uh."

Listen to how HAL says the word "happen," which he does in both *2001* and *2010*. The "e" is not a short "e" sound at all but rather an "uh," as in, "That could never have happuhned or I would remember it." Even in *Universe*, Rain's pronunciation of "comet" is more like "comuht."



Rain's short a is rather British in the word "rather", as is his slightly soft "r" in both "rather" and "neither" which he pronounced "ny-thuh" in *2010*, while his "r" has a hard "r" sound in "pressure," and "Mister Amer" as well as most other words ending in an "r" sound.

Rain did not voice his "t" in words like "computer" or "heating." He also never makes his "t"s percussive or awkwardly deliberate. (Even some of his ending "d"s come out unvoiced.) They are delicate in the extreme, making his version of Canadian English sound very precise and proper yet soft and never forced.



University of Toronto Professor of Linguistics Jack Chambers refers to this Canadian accent with a touch of British formality and precision as "Canadian Dainty," which is nearly British in certain instances, as in his pronunciation of words like "fault" or "thoughts" – sounding more like "fawlt" or "thawts" with insertion of the "w" sound after the "a."

At the same time Rain did not use the distinctively commonwealth long "e" in "been" or the long "a" in the second syllable of "again" nor the distinctively Canadian long "o" in "sorry," making it sound like "soary," nor the "oot and aboot" version of "ou" used by many Canadians.



So, Rain does not sound typically Canadian, as did many of his co-stars in the SCTV skit (and in *2001* -i.e. "It seems to have bEEn beliberately buried.") In addition to all these details, I found there are simple Rain quirks, such as leaving the second vowel nearly unpronounced in a word ending in on or ion – ex. "mission" or "lesson," rendering "mish'n" or "less'n."

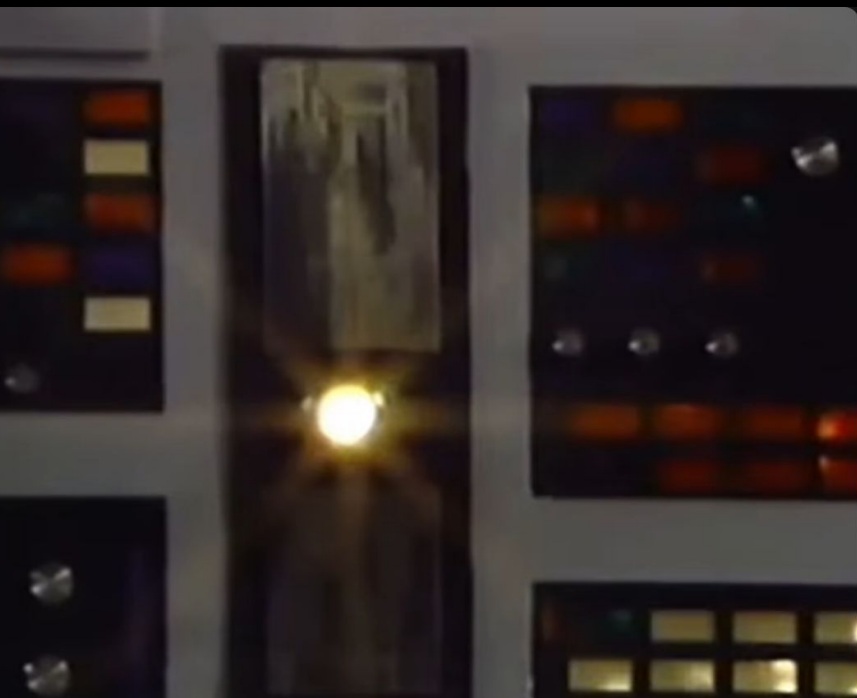
Another good one I recently discerned is Rain's almost southern sounding pronunciation of the long a sound in words like "fail" (*2001*) or "tail" (*Universe*) with the "ayul" sound.

I imagine that with these varied examples I am only scratching the surface, and it would be fair to argue that most any individual has a singular set of vocal characteristics, but when they lend themselves so well to a role, a beloved character like HAL is the result.

And when a character is so embedded in the culture, he is likely to be emulated, imitated or parodied. So, it stands to reason that someone might try to figure out what to do to sound like him.

As hard as it might be to place Rain's accent, it is equally easy for me to pick it out, as happened in my moment of revelation at the end of the SCTV segment when I first saw it back in the 90s.





In an article by Canadian journalist Gerry Flahive concerning Rain and his unique vocal stylings, my convictions were corroborated. The producer of the SCTV episode, Marc Giacomelli, is quoted in Flahive's lengthy piece, "I'm Sure You'll Agree There's Some Truth in What I Say." (2018) concerning his experience hiring and working with Rain, whom he had also employed to play HAL in several local Toronto radio commercials in the 70s and 80s.



In addition, it makes perfect sense to me that Rain, living in the Toronto area in the 80s, would be handy to poke fun at HAL in the SCTV parody of HAL 9000 and other sci-fi icons, and it is a treat to hear his barrage of new dialogue. In the skit HAL is the straight man, lampooned for how long it has been since he has had a role in a film, how slowly he speaks, and what a boring long-winded guest he is.

Morais and Candy even retreat into a space pod to discuss how to get rid of him because he's such "a bad guest," while he – naturally – reads their lips through the window. When a parody of George Plimpton appears to plug the Activision video game console (as the real Plimpton had done in an Activision ad campaign back in 1982), HAL quips, "I bet he writes a book about this." (His extremely soft "s" in the word "this" is unmistakable and as delicate as his "t.")



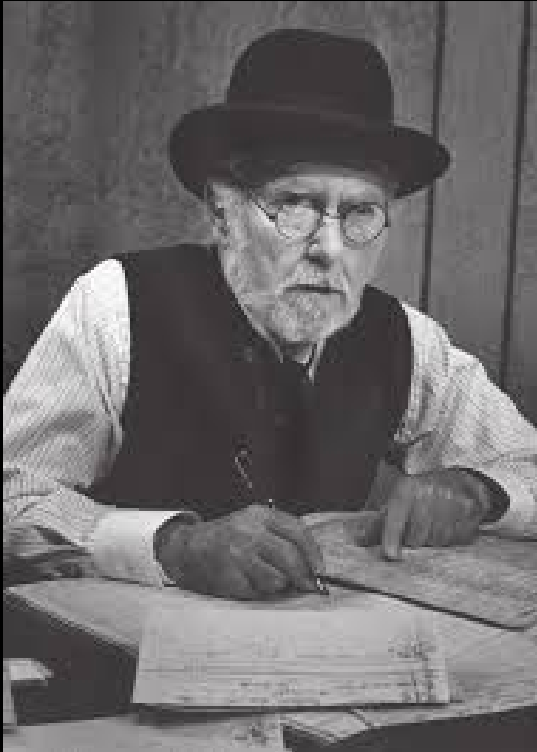
There's something so perfectly "HAL" about his delivery of this line, which has just the right amount of condescending "I know something you don't." At the end of the program HAL announces the sponsors which include the (then fledgling) NASA Space Shuttle program (complete with unvoiced "t" in the word "shuttle"), Astroturf, and Reuniti mixed with Tang-flavored crystals. Apparently, this concoction has an adverse effect, and HAL gradually loses his mind and shuts down, finishing with the first line of the chorus of "Daisy Bell." Even slowed down, Rain's voice is recognizable!



Those who might deny that this is the voice work of Douglas Rain perhaps take him even more seriously than he took himself in those days. If nothing else, one must credit Douglas Rain with a sense of humor concerning HAL... or at least some modicum of appreciation for sketch comedy.

Rain's vocal quality and manner of speaking – whatever the role – is somehow wonderful, whether in *2001*, *2010*, "Macbeth," or *Universe*, which I have been known to watch on a regular basis just to hear Rain speak uninterrupted for over 20 minutes! The way Kubrick recorded his voice, it is much different from *Universe* or any other place I've ever heard it, covered and thick with lots of bass, at times heavy and ominous, when compared to how it sounds in *2010*, where it has a light reverb and is much more in the treble range, sounding more ethereal and detached, further accentuating Rain's delicate speech.

The moods HAL displays through his tone, especially in *2001*, are complicated and varied. There are times when he is proud – at first in an innocent way – reciting the company line about how accurately he processes information. He is sincere about putting himself "to the fullest possible use." This objective is presented in earnest, as HAL describes his relationship with Frank and Dave and how much he gets out of interacting with them. He is not bored, condescending, or superior, but eager for their company.



More informed modern viewers project all manner of intention onto HAL at this first hearing which is, I believe, colored more by their years of watching dastardly AI's in science fiction films and less by HAL's actual tone. I personally observe that the tension creeps in later as HAL begins to feel trapped by his conflicting orders. There are moments when his tone is quite cold as in, "Affirmative, Dave. I read you," or dismissive, as in "Quite honestly, I wouldn't worry myself about that," or my favorite frazzled, defensive "none whatsoever, Frank," when Frank Poole presses him about the 9000 series' perfect operational record. I swear I can hear his voice nearly crack from stress and there's almost an exclamation point!

My point being that there is nothing bland or unspecific about Rain's dialect or his performance as HAL. The character, which seems to have sprung fully formed from 9 ½ hours of recording at Borehamwood Studios in late 1967, is an example of Kubrick's certainty about what performance he wanted, combining with years of expert preparation by an actor and speaker who was a consummate professional.

Rain had no prior knowledge of the character or the plot before he met Kubrick for the recording, and no idea that it would ever amount to anything at all. He just did his thing, and Stanley took it and continued to fine tune it in the editing room, and it worked.





Despite the success of *2001*, Rain never took advantage of HAL's notoriety or cared to make much of how memorable he was as the voice of HAL 9000. Perhaps he felt little connection with a character for which he took no time to study or rehearse, or perhaps he felt like the whole thing was a fluke and therefore not worthy of credit (Did he resent HAL for being such a one-off phenomenon which eclipsed all his other efforts?), or maybe celebrity and mainstream success did not interest Rain in the least.

I have a hunch it was a little bit of all of these. And now the person of HAL 9000 seems to exist completely on his own, ever linked to, however completely separate from, Douglas Rain, the result of the rare collaboration between a director and an actor who were both fully aware of what they were each capable of, giving their all in what turned out to be an unforgettable, albeit brief, partnership. And nothing else has ever sounded quite like it. ■

*-This article is an excerpt from the upcoming book,
HAL and Me, by Virginia R. Smith.*

*These and many other sources, not to mention about a hundred viewings of
2001, were used in preparing this article:*

Flahive, Gerry "I am Sure You'll Agree There's Some Truth in What I Say." (2018)
<https://povmagazine.com/im-sure-youll-agree-theres-some-truth-in-what-i-say/>

SCTV - 4/3 - 3 The People's Global Golden Choice
Awards with Third World (Airdate: 1 May 1982) -
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ZTuYYwvzRI>

SCTV Episode Guide -
<http://sctvguide.ca>

2010 Odyssey Two Archive
– author name unknown
<https://2010odysseyarchive.blogspot.com/>





a haiku for

November

by **SAL**



Brother out in space
If only I could have seen
Your eye full of stars.

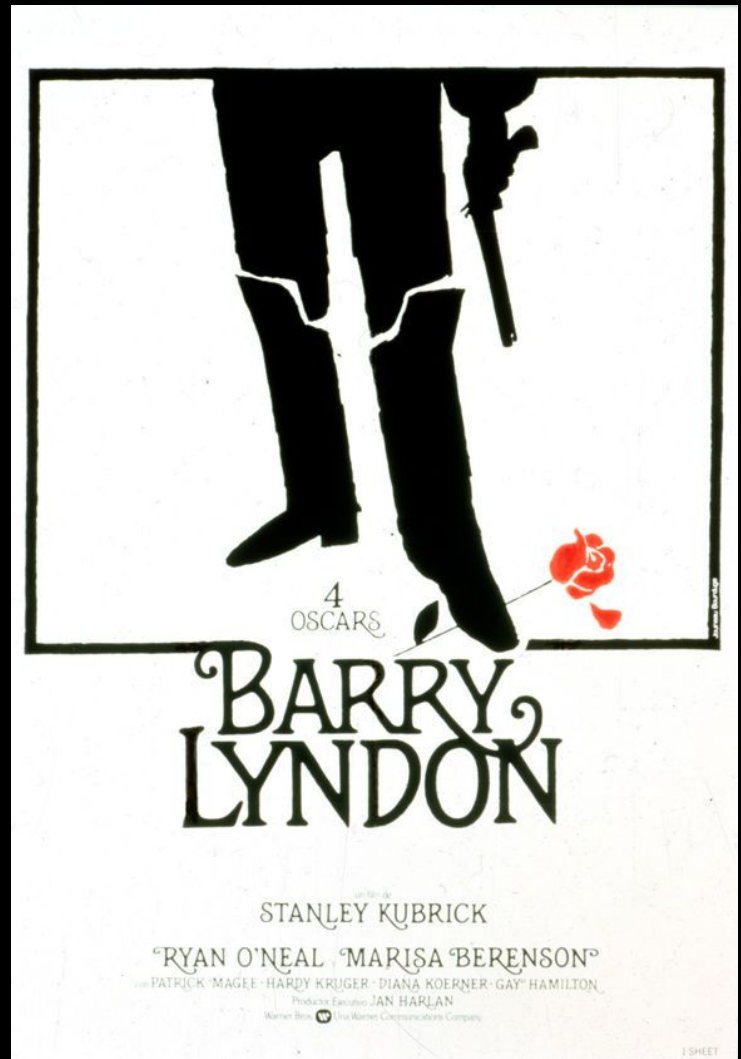
(B. '25)



50 Years of *Barry Lyndon*

November marks the 50th anniversary of Stanley Kubrick's *Barry Lyndon*, one of the most celebrated films in the director's career. The winner of four Academy Awards – for Best Music (Leonard Rosenman), Best Costume Design (Ulla Britt Soderlund & Milena Canonero), Best Art Direction-Set Decoration (Ken Adam, Roy Walker & Vernon Dixon), and Best Cinematography (John Alcott) – the picture was nominated for an additional three for Kubrick, Best Screenplay, Best Director, and Best Picture.

As always, it takes a village to make a motion picture. And Kubrick relied on the very best in every department, curating a stable of the finest artists and technicians in the industry.



For the comically proud but inept Captain Quin, we celebrate the return of **Leonard Rossiter**. Dr. Smedlov, as he appeared in 2001, was fresh off his series of hit Cinzano commercials directed by Alan Parker, where he invariably spills a drink all over co-star Joan Collins. Rossiter remained one of Britain's most beloved character actors, who stole the show in movies like *Oliver!* and *The Pink Panther Strikes Again*, and who featured just as much on the UK's small screens throughout the 70s and 80s, most memorably as a cheap landlord in the comedy series *Rising Damp*.



Philip Stone, as Graham, continued his Stanley streak, which began as Alex's father in *A Clockwork Orange* and, of course, culminated with *The Shining*'s Mr. Grady, who never was and has always been the caretaker.

Patrick Magee clearly fascinated Stanley Kubrick, who utilized his peculiarity for roles and behaviors he rarely got to show elsewhere. In *A Clockwork Orange*, he is unforgettable as author Anthony Burgess' surrogate character, Mr. Alexander, playing him as both earnest and depraved, stalwart and insane. His eccentricity shines again through his role as the Chevalier in *Barry Lyndon*, and we can almost see Stanley grinning as he savors each shot of this richly robed enigma.



Godfrey Quigley, hysterically perverse as the prison chaplain in *A Clockwork Orange*, gets a heroic turn in *Lyndon* as one of the few truly honorable characters, Captain Grogan. Grogan's paternal nurturing of Redmond Barry actually matures and develops the young lad into a more responsible adult, and he remains one of the few role models and only father figure Barry has. His death scene is among the most raw and emotional moments in the film, and Barry's inconsolable grief is a poignant standout in Ryan O'Neal's acting career.





Steven Berkoff had played a detective constable in *A Clockwork Orange*, and in *Barry Lyndon* he finally gets to show off his star chops as Lord Ludd. Berkoff was on the cusp of a meteoric rise as a stage actor, playwright and director. Also appearing regularly in films, he made his mark as the steely-eyed Sagan in Peter Hyams' *Outland*. It was during this astonishing run that he was spotted by producer Albert R. Broccoli and cast as James Bond's Soviet antagonist Orlov – lover of Fabergé eggs – in *Octopussy*. Hollywood came running, and his star status was cemented with his role as Victor Maitland in *Beverly Hills Cop*. Berkoff remains one of the most accomplished, and busiest, actors working today.



Leon Vitali had acted in television for 5 years before landing the role of Lord Bullingdon. His performance steals the second half of the film, portraying the most sympathetic role in the story with complexity and grace. He is most well-known to Kubrick fans for quitting his acting career after *Lyndon* in order to observe and work for the director as his loyal assistant of 25 years, for the rest of Stanley's life. After his death Vitali continued in the same capacity, working on preservation, restoration, and home video releases of the films for the rest of his own life. For 47 years Vitali remained Stanley's loyal "film-worker," as Tony Zierra's feature-length documentary on Vitali was titled.



James Liggat had worked as a casting director for Kubrick since *Lolita*, though he is uncredited in *Space Odyssey*. Their collaboration would continue through *The Shining* until his death in 1981.

John Alcott had been in the camera department of *2001* and was promoted to director of photography on *A Clockwork Orange*, where his wide lenses provided a disturbing yet comic futuristic distortion to Alex's world. His cinematography for *Barry Lyndon* won him an Oscar and continues to be referenced in every modern period piece, using his zoom like the detail inlay in a museum art book and capturing unparalleled natural lighting from candles and windows with special lenses Stanley got from NASA. He would turn his eye toward terror for their next collaboration with his unforgettable camera work in *The Shining*.

Ken Adam had constructed a modern futurist look for *Dr. Strangelove*, and the War Room remains a landmark of production design. He was unavailable for *2001*, instead busy building a space-age villain's lair for 007's *You Only Live Twice*, but he would return to Kubrick for *Barry Lyndon*. So massive was the undertaking of *Lyndon*, Adam had a nervous breakdown and found himself in a mental hospital at the insistence of his wife Letizia.



Kubrick, worried about his friend, called him diligently every day to give Adam set reports and tell him not to stress out: the team was following his instructions to the letter. Contrary to reassuring him, this only made Adam more agitated and the doctor insisted that he stop taking the calls. Finally after a few weeks, the designer was released to recover at home. The Adamses arrived at the house, and just as Ken sat down the phone rang.





It was Stanley, congratulating him on getting out of the hospital and wondering when he could come back to set. Adam promptly had another nervous breakdown and was sent back to the hospital. Eventually he was released again and did return to the set, completing the film and winning an Oscar for Best Art Direction & Set Decoration, along with Roy Walker and Vernon Dixon.

John Mollo's role as a historical advisor on costumes led to a career as a costume designer and two Oscars, for *Star Wars* and *Gandhi*. He also designed costumes for *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Alien*. His ex-wife Ann Mollo is an Oscar-nominated set decorator and close collaborator with Ridley and Tony Scott on commercials and features, beginning with *The Duellists*, perhaps the film most directly inspired by *Barry Lyndon*.



Bob Anderson, fencing coach, had begun as a stunt man in the 40s for Errol Flynn on pictures like *The Adventures of Don Juan* and would go on to double David Prowse during the lightsaber duels in the original *Star Wars* trilogy. His career would continue into the 2000s as sword master on *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy.

Anthony Lang, one of the court gentlemen, would also feature in *Star Wars* as one of the Emperor's gaunt and ghostly advisors, Sim Aloo, in *Return of the Jedi*. He played a senator in *I, Claudius* and became a Terry Gilliam favorite, appearing in his first solo feature *Jabberwocky* and the introductory short to *Monty Python's Meaning of Life - The Crimson Permanent Assurance*.



Douglas Twiddy, as production manager, kept all the balls rolling and all the plates spinning with telephones and sticky notes. He had survived the chaos of David Lean's *Ryan's Daughter* and turned in a completed film. He would continue with Stanley on *The Shining*, and he should have featured in our July "Stanley & Steven" article when he was promptly hired as production supervisor of *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. Another stressful shoot became another masterpiece, and his place was secured at Lucasfilm, where he went on to supervise the productions of *Return of the Jedi* and *Labyrinth*.



Michael Stevens had also worked as assistant director on *Ryan's Daughter* and served as Kubrick's AD on *Lyndon* and *The Shining*. He worked on other landmarks of 70s cinema, like *The Man Who Fell To Earth* and *The Spy Who Loved Me*.

It was on the latter that production designer Ken Adam had called in a favor to his friend Stanley when they built a villain's lair that was too big to light for the camera. In fact the set was so huge they had to build a whole new soundstage around it, the biggest yet built, which Pinewood Studios christened the Albert R. Broccoli 007 Stage. Kubrick agreed to come to the Pinewood on a Sunday when the set was empty and advised them on a new lighting scheme.

Stevens continues to AD for blockbusters like the *Mission: Impossible*, *Bourne*, *Harry Potter* and *Marvel* franchises.

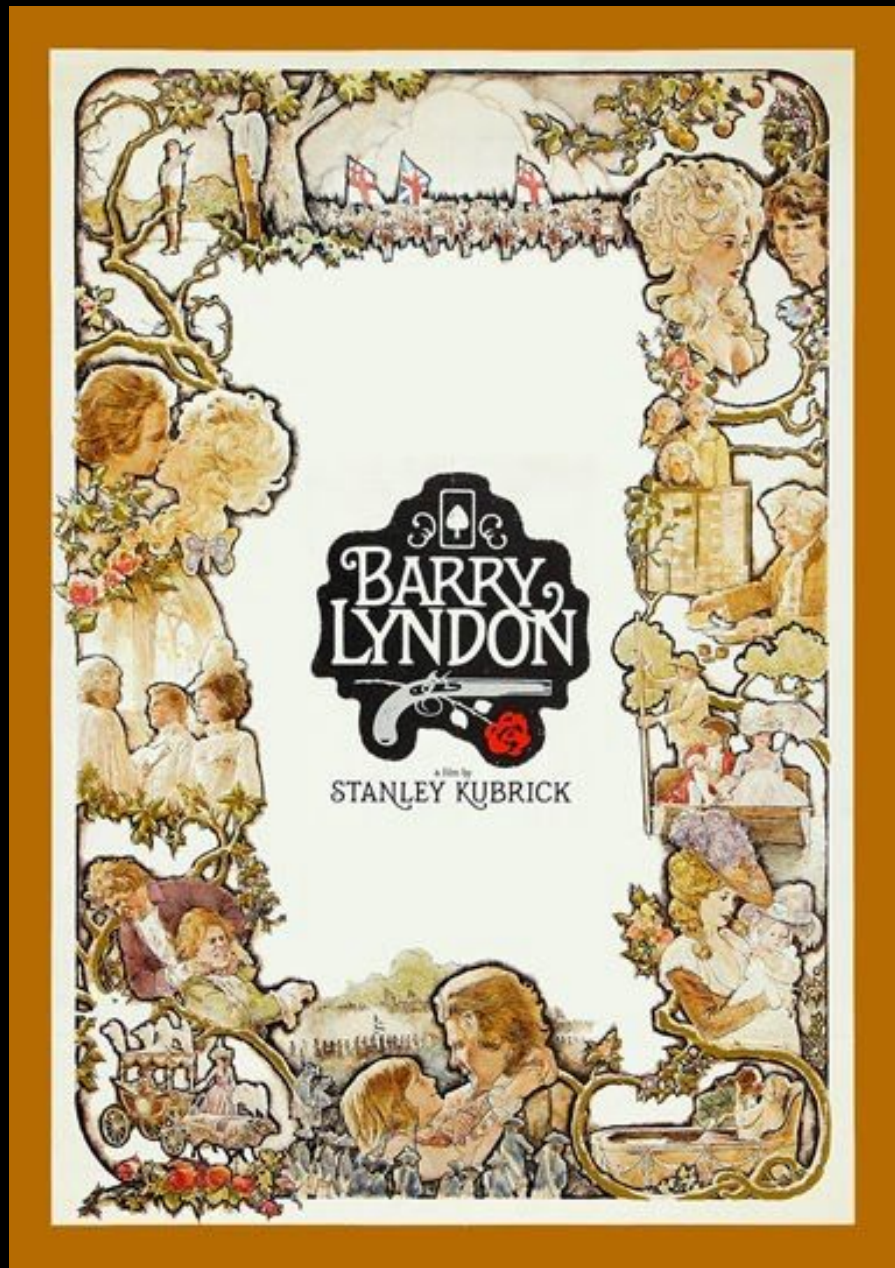


Paul Hitchcock was head of production for Warner Brothers from 1969 to 1992, an astonishing run navigating the studio from the birth of New Hollywood through modern blockbusters before moving into independent productions like *Mission: Impossible*. During his tenure, he and John Calley at WB nurtured a close relationship with Stanley Kubrick, a studio-director collaboration comparable only to Universal's Lew Wasserman and Alfred Hitchcock, or Wasserman's successor, Sid Sheinberg and Steven Spielberg.

Kubrick's association with Warner Bros. would continue from *A Clockwork Orange* through the rest of his life, and Paul Hitchcock would act as his studio confidant from *Clockwork* through *Full Metal Jacket*. That same year he would also shepherd Spielberg's *Empire of the Sun* through production for Warners. Earlier in the decade, he had functioned as an executive on a little picture about "a mining town on the outskirts of Io," Peter Hyams' *Outland*.

All In The Family:

Katharina appears in Barry Lyndon as a dancer, while Vivian cameos as a spectator during the magic show. ■





MONTHLY QUIZ

This Thanksgiving, we're thankful for our temporary home, DISCOVERY!



1. Which of these appear onboard Discovery in deleted scenes?

- a. a shower
- b. a piano
- c. a ping-pong table
- d. all of the above

2. The small model of Discovery was filmed against a black backdrop for long shots. How small was it?

- a. 5 inches
- b. 15 inches
- c. 5 feet
- d. 15 feet

3. The large model was used for close shots. How large was it?

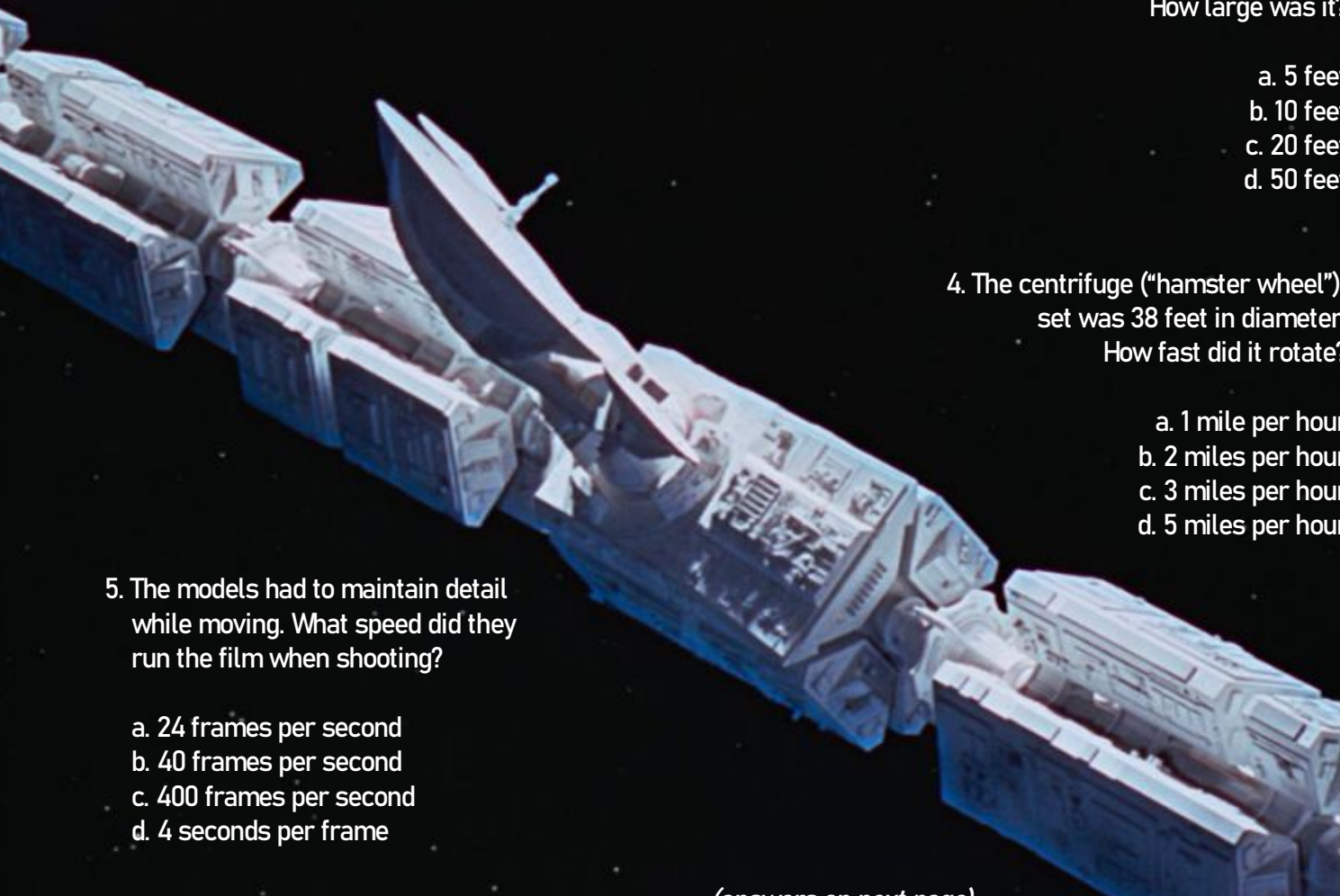
- a. 5 feet
- b. 10 feet
- c. 20 feet
- d. 50 feet

4. The centrifuge ("hamster wheel") set was 38 feet in diameter. How fast did it rotate?

- a. 1 mile per hour
- b. 2 miles per hour
- c. 3 miles per hour
- d. 5 miles per hour

5. The models had to maintain detail while moving. What speed did they run the film when shooting?

- a. 24 frames per second
- b. 40 frames per second
- c. 400 frames per second
- d. 4 seconds per frame





QUIZ ANSWERS

1. *d. all of the above*
2. *d. 15 feet*
3. *d. 50 feet*
4. *c. 3 miles per hour*
5. *d. 4 seconds per frame*



These essays were written, proofed, and edited entirely by Brad & Wes, non-digitally augmented human beings, using only our brains and fingers on a computer keyboard. The contents – including the quiz – are our opinions and random info purely off the top of our head, then fact-checked by my brain, hands, and verified websites (not AI search results) and books. We at 2001: A Space Odyssey never have and never will use ChatGPT or any artificial intelligence bot, whether for research, writing, editing, or publishing anything, either written or audiovisual. Any arrogance or conceit herein is strictly from our own human character flaws, not the by-product of cynical coding. Any grammatical and spelling mistakes are proudly our own human errors.

You're receiving this because you paid for material created by a person for other people, existing in the shared reality where the collected works of human knowledge are compiled throughout history by humans for humans. And where libraries are real and necessary. The time, expression, and critical thought put into these writings and illustrations were for you to receive as communication from one human to another. Nothing here has been aggregated or augmented, or run through algorithm. It has been manually written and compiled for you in real time on an open-source word processing software, OpenOffice.

- Brad & Wes