

Most directors don't control time, they work within its constraints. Stanley Kubrick is not like most directors. Kubrick is not controlled by time, he controls it.

Kubrick exercises his control of time by his use of visuals, most notably titles and editing. To very good examples of this are 2001 A Space Odyssey, and The Shining.

In 2001, the whole theme of the film is time and man's travel through it in an evolutionary sense. Kubrick doesn't sit back and let the story-line carry the theme. He visually forces the hands of the clock at his desire. Five million years might take only two minutes to pass on Kubrick's screen, or two minutes might take what feels like five million years. What ever is necessary.

The opening shot in 2001 is the sun rising. The dawn of a new day. But this 'dawn' is used again and again throughout the film. Every time it is shown it denotes a 'dawn' of time of a new era. The first time however it is the dawn of man.

This first section of the film also uses the black screen. The next five minutes are as follows; After the dawn there are shots of ape-like creatures, then a black screen for approximately two seconds. Then an ape and a mountain lion fighting. Black again. Next ape fighting ape. Black. Apes see a leopard and stay in a cave. Black. Night time and then the dawn scene is shown twice. Up until this point, time has been moving at a set pace, slowly. Life until the double sunrise has been progressing normally. Kubrick was doing what any documentary director would do

if he was filming a piece for Marlon Perkins. But at the double sunrise, Kubrick (not Perkins) wants to pick up the pace. The next scene in the film is the one it is known for; it is the big black slab that sticks out of the ground and that nobody that has ever seen the film has admitted to truly understanding it. (Sidetrack: I asked Walter, and HE said he didn't really know what it was!) However, it really doesn't have to be anything in particular. All it is, is what ever Kubrick's idea is to what spurred evolution on.

The whole trick to the scene is the double sunrise and the nighttime shot. Kubrick advances millions of years in a minute and literally makes it seem like it happened over night. It wasn't there when the apes went to sleep that night. But the scenes following prove the passage of time. After examining it, the sun dawns over the black monolith, and then the screen cuts to black. Out of the black there is one ape. He has a bone which in his playing with it, he starts to bash other bones. Finally he raises it above his head, and he has grasped the idea of tools and weapons. A monumental step in the evolution of man. From there he tosses it above his head, it spins and fades into a spaceship spinning in space. Kubrick's two second fade and editing just covered about four and a half million years.

Section two of the film a discovery on the moon that all the VIP's from Earth are arriving to see. Kubrick keeps the audience in the dark as to what it is. (But he gives them plenty of contrapuntal music to listen to while they are waiting.)



The discovery is the black monolith found standing up and is excavated around. Kubrick ties into the first part, the dawn of man, with this scene. It is time for the next step in man's evolution. The sun dawns over the monolith and the screen goes to black.

Kubrick's first use of titles in the film takes place now. White letters on a black screen read: "JUPITER MISSION 18 MONTHS LATER". This is his second way of controlling time. Instead of using creative editing, Kubrick simply tells the audience that 18 months have passed and the Jupiter Mission is now taking place.

A minor visual scene that adds to the theme of time controlling is the astronauts in hibernation. Man controlling time and its effects on him.

Also one must note that the shuttles on board look amazingly like an egg. Kubrick is foreshadowing what is to come.

White letters on a black screen appear again and read: "JUPITER AND BEYOND. THE INFINITE". This is followed by the black monolith floating throughout the planets in the solar system and past the spaceship. It is heading towards Jupiter.

The following sequence of events happen very quickly. All the planets line up, with the monolith in the middle. It disappears. The astronaut that escaped HAL falls through a computer graphics tunnel and finally there is an explosion that resembles a super nova. Then the quick cutting of scenes in the beginning of the film is repeated. The

Astronaut finds himself in a Baroque style room. He eats dinner and accidentally breaks a glass, (man's flaws?), then sees himself in bed. He looks again the man in the bed has gotten much older and is near death. The old man points to something, the young man turns to look and sees the black monolith. And the the whole film ends with the last scene of a large embryo looking down at Earth. Fini. The evolution of man is complete, for the time being, at least for another couple of million years.

Kubrick's use of time isn't as nearly earth-moving in The shining as it is in 2001, but it is just as effective.

Time in The Shining is not used to project some grand illusion of millions of years passing. It is used to build suspense. Kubrick doesn't need the elaborate sunrise scenes. All he needs are the titles. Simple white on black lettering do all the work.

The basic story line in the film is about a down and out author who needs some time away from it all to get out of his slump. He finds a job as caretaker of a summer resort in a very isolated area of Colorado during the winter months. He gets the job and moves his family into the hotel. He then goes crazy, possessed by the spirits of the dead in the hotel and tries to murder his wife and child.

Throughout all this Kubrick controls the time. The first black screen reads: "October 23rd 1984". This is the date that Jack and the family move in. The month, day, and year are in the quote, the scene is set. Life moves on, and the family settles in and the title reads: "The first week". The pace picks up, Jack starts to slip mentally, and the

screen reads: "Monday". A bit more starts to happen, Jack imagines himself drinking in the hotel bar. "Tuesday" is next. More degression on Jack's part. "Thursday" appears, he sleeps all day and is being terribly unsocialible.

Finally, Kubrick elevates the action to the highest level by a simple title " 8 a.m. ". All the following action proceeds at a break-neck speed and almost, towards the point of filming in real time. This form of editing and the use of titles brings about a controlled free-fall of time in the audience. Slowly Kubrick builds on each event. He quickens the pace by the kind of time in the titles. First it is a month. Then it is a week in that month. Then it is a day, and finally just the hour is shown.

Kubrick's manipulation of time serves the two films justly. In 2001, he makes time pass in large leaps and bounds to serve the idea of of man's evolution. In The Shining, he uses time in the direct opposite way, shorter and shorter increments, to build suspense and fear. Either way, Stanley Kubrick uses time. Time does not use Stanley Kubrick.

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