

CINEFANTASTIQUE

SCREENING THE IMAGINATION

Week 5: *Planet of the Vampires* (1965), *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) and *House* (1977)

Planet of the Vampires (1965)

- AIP (American International Pictures) had made significant profits by distributing American edits/dubbed versions of Italian films, particularly Mario Bava productions like *Black Sabbath* (1963) and *Black Sunday* (1960)
- The company decided to take this process one step further – co-producing some of these features rather than merely distributing pre-made Italian films
- This way they could retain more control over production
- It was an incredibly low budget production
- However, Bava was able to bring forth all of his technical expertise and cinematography knowhow to disguise the cheapness
- Miniatures and forced perspective visuals are used throughout

“Do you know what that unknown planet was made of? A couple of plastic rocks — yes, two: one and one! — left over from a mythological movie made at Cinecittà! To assist the illusion, I filled the set with smoke.”

Mario Bava

- Undoubtedly, *Planet of the Vampires* was a visual and narrative influence on *Alien* (1979)

Kubrick Pre and Post 2001

“Kubrick’s oeuvre is divided into two periods, before and after 2001. Besides the introduction of colour...a less visible demarcation line is traced by his ongoing struggle to overcome the influence of (Orson) Welles. After a first period in which every image designated him as Welles’s successor, nothing Kubrick did after 2001 resembles anything by Welles, because this is when Kubrick began making films that are like no films that had ever been seen, including his own.”

Bill Krohn

2001: A Space Odyssey (1968)

- The ‘dawn of man’ sequence – an unconventional and challenging opening scene for a film
- No dialogue
- Innovative use of music
- Contains one of the most incredible ‘cuts’ in cinema history
- The Monolith is discovered – mankind’s evolution is set, when they take up the bone – a rudimentary weapon
- We cut to 2001, 400,000 years into the future

“Here Kubrick not only shortens time but elides the whole of human history. He uses the functional economy of a (silent) cut to remove from his film virtually everything that has ever been thought or done.”

Mark Cousins

- This was taking sci-fi to ground zero
- Ground breaking techniques
- Breathtaking special effects
- Revolutionized the way that sci-fi looked and felt
- A much more realistic (scientifically approached) final product
- Research /scientific advisers
- As real as it could be for the time
- Incredible attention to detail

- A strange and challenging narrative
- More a series of seemingly unrelated vignettes
- Unsettling leaps in time and space
- No real sense of a protagonist

HAL

“The most obviously dystopian element in 2001, the deranged HAL 900, represents artificial intelligence as a rebel angel – a man-made artifact that turns on man. Or does HAL represent the next logical stage in human evolution, the ongoing process of mechanization that began with the ape-man's bone club?”

Daniel O'Brien

Men, Machines and Technology

HAL 9000

- Helpful
- Informative
- Polite
- Shows interest in Bowman's art

The Astronauts

- Anonymous
- Subservient
- Nothing more than drones
- As mechanized as the spaceship they inhabit

Reception

- Due to the film's unique and ambiguous nature – it didn't initially fair well at the box office
- But it was the ambiguous ending and its ethereal music which probably saved the film from being pulled
- The film was advertised as 'The Ultimate Trip' – appealing to the counter culture hippies who began turning up to watch the film in droves

Nobuhiko Obayashi and *House* (1977)

- Obayashi's films would develop the tone of Japanese experimental cinema through the 1960s.
- In these early experimental films, Obayashi employed a number of avant-garde techniques that he would carry into his later mainstream work.
- Though these films tended to be of a personal nature, they received public viewership due to distribution by the Art Theatre Guild.
- Unlike other experimental filmmakers Obayashi decided to work with commercial advertising agency Dentsu
- He saw this 'commercial' opportunity as a way to develop his artistic credentials
- *House* came about when Toho sought to cash in on the success of *Jaws* (1975)
- Obayashi asked his daughter to describe what she thought a monster movie would be like – the result was *House*