

DVD Review: Stanley Kubrick's 'The Killing' Features Early Work of Future Master

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on August 25, 2011 - 2:24pm

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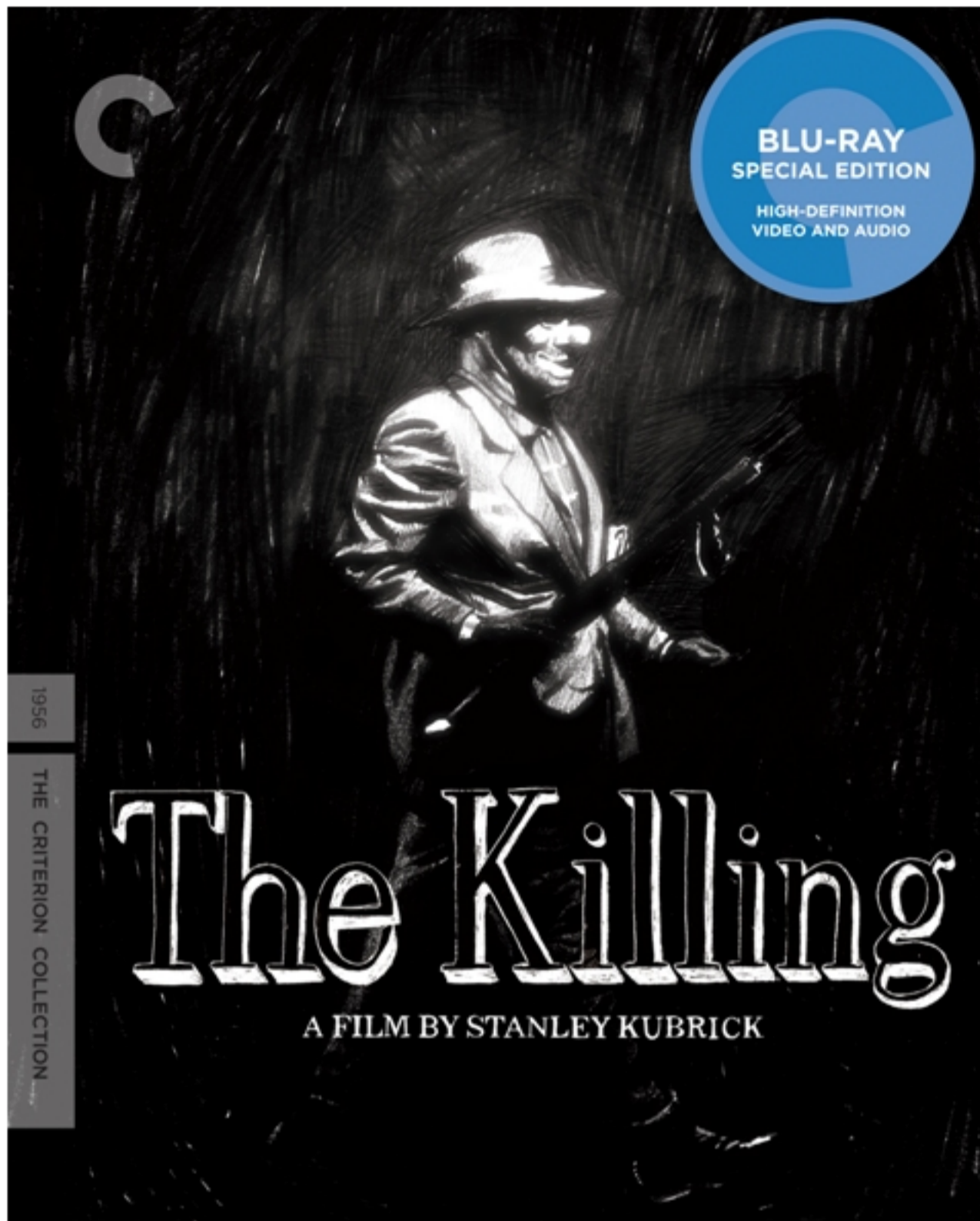
CHICAGO – When film lovers hear the name of one of the great masters of the form — Stanley Kubrick — their mind usually races to one of his most famous flicks, whether it be “2001: A Space Odyssey,” “A Clockwork Orange,” “Dr. Strangelove,” “The Shining,” or even “Full Metal Jacket.” But where did one of our most beloved directors hone his craft? In a series of smaller films, two of which are now available in a single Criterion Blu-ray or DVD release — “The Killing” and “Killer’s Kiss.”



Blu-Ray Rating: **4.5/5.0**

Synopsis:

Stanley Kubrick's account of an ambitious racetrack robbery is one of Hollywood's tautest, twistiest noirs. Aided by a radically time-shuffling narrative, razor-sharp dialogue from pulp novelist Jim Thompson, and a phenomenal cast of character actors, including Sterling Hayden, Coleen Gray, Timothy Carey, Elisha Cook Jr., and Marie Windsor, The Killing is both a jaunty thriller and a cold-blooded punch to the gut. And with its precise tracking shots and gratifying sense of irony, it's Kubrick to the core.



The Killing was released on Criterion Blu-ray and DVD on August 16th, 2011

Photo credit: Courtesy of the Criterion Collection

So many of the trademarks of Kubrick's style are on display in his early work that they should be of interest to all film historians. "The Killing" is drenched in style, feeling so unlike other noirs (it did come late in the popularity of the genre) that it almost exists in its own genre. The film seems almost like a bridge between the noirs of the '40s and the heist movies that would be more popular in the '70s. Once again, Kubrick feels ahead of his time. There's a different urgency and pacing here than most movies of the period. It's an unusual film, not my favorite of Kubrick's but lesser Kubrick is still better than many other filmmaker's best work.



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Photo credit: Courtesy of the Criterion Collection

And it doesn't hurt to be able to revisit "The Killing" with a gorgeous new transfer. We weren't granted a review copy of the Blu-ray (although that's clearly the way to go) but even the standard transfer looks absolutely incredible upconverted on a BD player. This is a spectacular remastering, even in the standard form. I bet it looks incredible on Blu-ray. The special features are also remarkably hefty with new interviews and a restored high-definition digital transfer of Kubrick's previous film, 1955's "Killer's Kiss". Yes, the ENTIRE film along with a video appreciation of it by film critic Geoffrey O'Brien. Criterion has long won the battle of the most interesting special features but this may be their most remarkable.

Are these great movies on their own? Not really. (Although they are marvelously enjoyable, especially "The Killing," which has some amazing lines, including when Marie Windsor tells the dying man she's betrayed to get out because he "*looks terrible*" and a ridiculously-hilarious finale in which another noir hero learns that all the planning in the world can't account for even the most unusual, random event.) Both films are marvelous pieces of noir entertainment, but it is watching both "The Killing" and "Killer's Kiss" in light of what Stanley Kubrick would go on to contribute to the form that adds gravity to them, not unlike early demos of future hall of fame musicians. You can literally see Kubrick figuring out his own style in "The Killing." It's fascinating stuff.

Special Features:

- o Video Interview With Producer James B. Harris
- o Excerpted Interviews with Actor Sterling Hayden From the French Television Series Cinema Cinemas
- o Video Interview with Poet and Author Robert Polito About Writer Jim Thompson
- o Trailer

Disc 2:

- o Restored High-Definition Digital Transfer of Stanley Kubrick's 1955 Noir Feature Killer's Kiss
- o New Video Appreciation of Killer's Kiss Featuring Film Critic Geoffrey O'Brien
- o Trailer
- o Booklet Featuring an Essay by Film Historian Haden Guest and a
- o Reprinted Interview With Actress Marie Windsor

"The Killing" stars Sterling Hayden, Coleen Gray, Vince Edwards, Jay C. Flippen, Marie Windsor, and Ted DeCorsia. It was written and directed by Stanley Kubrick. The Criterion DVD and Blu-ray were released on August 16th, 2011.



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