

Mystery of Stanley Kubrick Explored in 'Room 237'

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on April 6, 2013 - 7:57am

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Rating: **4.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – Every film buff remembers the first time they laid eyes on director Stanley Kubrick's memorable horror classic, "The Shining." In the film, Scatman Crothers' character warns young Danny, "There ain't nothing in Room 237...so stay out." Filmmaker Rodney Ascher has ignored that warning in his documentary, "Room 237," and takes us inside one of the most analyzed films in cinema history.

"Room 237" in the film "The Shining" is that room in the Overlook Hotel where everything seemed to happen, and the documentary takes the same approach in revisiting the film. Director Ascher has gathered some of most interesting theories regarding the messages that director Stanley Kubrick hid behind the strange narrative of a scary hotel, the breakdown of a writer and a little boy who can see the evil there. With the digital age – including the ability to stop a film frame-by-frame on a DVD and indulge in what lies within them, and then post those findings on the internet – a cult of personality has grow regarding "The Shining," and the enduring mystery of Stanley Kubrick. Although the documentary has several slow spots, it is fascinating, whether you believe the theories or not.

It has been over 30 years since the release of Stanley Kubrick's "The Shining," based on a novel by Stephen King and featuring Jack Nicholson, Shelley Duvall, Scatman Crothers and child actor Danny Lloyd. On the surface, it is a classic psychological thriller, as the madness of an isolated writer in a snowbound hotel starts to affect his family. This includes his young son Danny, who has the ability to "shine," which involves reading thoughts and seeing the evil in the hotel.



Blast Off: Actor Danny Lloyd Resurrects Apollo 11 in 'Room 237'

Photo credit: IFC Midnight

In "Room 237", five different points of view are expressed regarding the film, including theories expressing the genocide of the American Indians, the Holocaust and the Apollo 11 moon landing, plus other freeze framed, mapped out and hyper analyzed visions of the ever-spellbinding universe of filmmaker Stanley Kubrick.

The film effectively uses the clips from "The Shining," both as examples for the theories and illustrative commentary on those theories. Ascher also goes into the filmography of Stanley Kubrick, who only made 12 major movies in his 40 year career. Those films speak to his other films, with threads and themes that are eerily similar. In the 30 years since the release of "The Shining," the cult that has dissected the film has only grown, despite pleas from the Kubrick camp – there was an article in the March 31st New York Times dismissing the theories from a long time associate of the late director – which only seems to fuel the fire.

The theory that is most probable – and opinions will vary on this as well – is Kubrick's background exploration of the Holocaust in "The Shining." What the theorist found is so likely, coupled with research that Kubrick did over the years in the possible formulation of his own Holocaust film, that the viewer can't help but go "yeah, that could be it." There are just so many clues, including multiplying the numbers of Room 237, two x three x seven, to equal 42. The year 1942 was the height of the genocide of the Jewish population under Hitler's reign. Obsessing about numbers aside, it was well-known that Stanley Kubrick was a scholar of that WWII horror.

What was less likely was the background exposition in "The Shining" that supposedly was an apology from Stanley Kubrick for faking the Apollo 11 moon landing (some conspiracy buffs have opined that Kubrick used technology learned in "2001: A Space Odyssey" to help the government fake the moon landing and save face). First, you have to presume that the landing is faked, and then using the scantest of clues, presume the apology is in "The Shining." Couldn't Kubrick have apologized in "Barry Lyndon"?



Jack Nicholson Indulges in Voyeurism in the Backward/Forward View in 'Room 237'

Photo credit: IFC Midnight

There is the sensational "backward/forward" theory as well, which postulates that "The Shining" is simply a reverse story of 2001. Two plus three plus seven equals 12, the reverse of 21. Add two zeroes, and it equals 2001. No problem. Also in the backward/forward mode, when "The Shining" is played from beginning to end, with the reverse of the film on top of the forward narrative, strange images and symbols emerge. It's endlessly weird and engrossing.

Get to this film if you love "The Shining," because it enhances and explores that classic beyond what is thought possible. "Room 237" also a testament to the enduring love of Stanley Kubrick and what is possible in film theory, both in expanding the borders of conventionality and heeding the warning to "stay out."

"Room 237" continues its limited release in Chicago on April 5th, and is available with Video On Demand. Check local listings for theaters, show times and VOD availability. Directed by Rodney Ascher. Not Rated.



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