



FILM: **DR. STRANGELOVE**

FDG RATING: 4.6 ☺☺☺☺☺

Film Discussion Group (FDG) Scale is 1-5 (5 is best)

Stanley Kubrick: *director*

Peter Sellers: *actor plays 3 roles,*

-Group Captain Mandrake (a British RAF exchange officer),

-US President Muffley,

-Dr. Strangelove (nuclear war expert and former Nazi who uses a wheelchair)

Slim Pickens: *actor, Major T.J. "King" Kong*

Sterling Hayden: *actor, Brigadier General Jack D. Ripper*

DATE: January 21, 2021

DISCUSSION SUMMARY:

### **DR. STRANGELOVE or: HOW I LEARNED TO STOP WORRYING AND LOVE THE BOMB**

The 1964 black comedy film, *Dr. Strangelove*, satirizes the Cold War fears of a nuclear conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States. It is an indictment of war and military power, a spoof of political and military insanity, beginning when Brigadier General Jack D. Ripper (Sterling Hayden), a paranoid maniacal United States Air Force general, mounts his singular campaign against Communism by ordering a squadron of B-52 bombers to attack the Soviet Union. He immediately seals in the base, so that there is no way for the President or anyone else to contact him, nor to countermand his orders, since he has given them in a top-secret code only he knows. What follows is a hectic, satirically exciting series of events, alternating between the General who has started it all, the planes en route to the USSR, and the Pentagon's war room, where the Chief Executive is trying his best to head off the nuclear war. The President of the United States, his advisors, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and a Royal Air Force (RAF) exchange officer attempt to prevent the crew of the B-52 from bombing the Soviets. One resident reviewer noted, the film is eerily timely, showing what could happen if a psycho has his finger on the button that could start a nuclear world war.

Many of us, who also had seen the film many years ago, were impressed by an amazing, unforgettable performance by Peter Sellers who plays three different characters: Group Captain Lionel Mandrake, US President Merkin Muffley, and Dr. Strangelove. He was supposed to also play Air Force Major Kong, but the role went to Slim Pickens after Sellers injured his ankle and couldn't squeeze into the cockpit. All the characters were hilarious. We had many favorite lines such as when the men are meeting in the War Room and were reminded, "No fighting in the War Room."

An audacious film to be made during the Cold War was another comment from a discussion participant. Another praised the black and white cinematography which underscored the fact that the world was rigidly split in 1964, and added to the timeless look of the whole picture.

Taking its satire to the extreme, *Dr. Strangelove* was exceptionally well done, scoring a ballistic 4.6 on our scale of 1 to 5. 5 is the best.

*Footnote: Wikipedia says the film is often considered one of the best comedies ever made, as well as one of the greatest films of all time. In 1998, the American Film Institute ranked it twenty-sixth in its list of the best American movies (in the 2007 edition, the film ranked thirty-ninth), and in 2000, it was listed as number three on its list of the funniest American films. In 1989, the United States Library of Congress included Dr. Strangelove as one of the first twenty-five films selected for preservation in the National Film Registry for being "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant".*



See you at the movies!

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