



Roy Scheider and Natasha Shneider prepare for an aero-braking maneuver that will throw the 'Leonov' into its Jupiter orbit.

Director, actors discuss film's merits

By FRANK BRUNI
Staff Writer

LOS ANGELES — If there is one concern that unites director Peter Hyams and the actors who worked with him on *2010*, it is that their film not be dismissed as just another technically dazzling foray into space or irrelevant piece of science fiction. If there is another, it is that their film's goals and merits be recognized as distinct from those of *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Stanley Kubrick's 1968 magnum opus.

"So often films that are technically ambitious are not films of the heart," Hyams said recently at a special press gathering in the Century Plaza hotel. "I wanted this to be a very, very emotional film."

One way in which he feels *2010* distinguishes itself and involves audiences is through its prominent politics. In the film, a joint space mission by the United States and the Soviet Union is set against a Central American confrontation between the superpowers.

"The movies that excite me the most are movies that besides being entertaining are ultimately about something," Hyams said. "There doesn't have to be a dichotomy between something that's entertaining and something that matters."

Hyams, who at 41 has directed six feature films, including last year's *The Star Chamber*, said that Kubrick's ghost did indeed hover over this project, but that its presence was more inspiring than daunting. He credited Kubrick with making possible the special effects that grace *2010*. He said the budget and success of *2001* had changed the film industry's attitudes toward what a film could accomplish visually and had inspired young filmmakers.

"I saw that movie and it was like getting a note in a bottle," Hyams said. "Here was this medium that I was so in love with that was positively limitless."

Hyams nevertheless asserted that his film shares little, save its space setting and background situation, with Kubrick's earlier work.

Keir Dullea, who played the protagonist of *2001* and is the only member of that film's cast to reappear in Hyams' film, agreed. He said *2010* achieves a "balance" between human interaction and technical wizardry that *2001* didn't.

"There's no gratuitous hardware," Dullea said. "I really loved the human-ness of the characters."

"*2001* was sort of like a giant Rorschach test," he said. "Peter's made a much more explicit kind of film."

Roy Scheider, who portrays Dr. Heywood Floyd, an American scientist at the helm of the U.S.-Soviet mission to Jupiter, echoed Dullea's sentiments. "So much of the first film left people in the air," he said. "In this film, we wanted to make sure people understood

what was happening."

Scheider said his character, whom the film initially introduces in a sequence of domestic scenes, helps to forge a link between the concerns of the audience and the sometimes very scientific nature of what's happening on the space mission.

"He's a kind of Everyman confronting the urban technological environment and extraordinary events and bureaucracy," Scheider said. "He's the man who expresses the audience's worries and concerns."

Like Scheider, Bob Balaban, who has appeared most recently in the films *Absence of Malice* and *Whose Life Is It, Anyway?*, saw in his character, computer expert Dr. Chandra, a chance to bridge the potential gulf between the ordinary man and the extraordinary environment of outer space. In preparing for his role, he visited research computer scientists from whom he hoped to glean ideas about how to play his part realistically yet humanely.

"I was just looking for ways my role could be as human as possible," Balaban said. "I met some fascinating people who gave me good ideas."

As concerned as they are with the realistic portrayal of human beings in the film, Hyams, Dullea, Scheider and Balaban don't make apologies for the film's look, which they describe as "wonderful," "miraculous," "fascinating." They all praised the work done by visual effects supervisor Richard Edlund, whose cinematic genius has transformed such films as *Star Wars*, *Polltergeist* and *Ghostbusters* into blockbusters.

While Edlund is proud of his work on the film, he said concessions and compromises are made on any project with additional other-than-visual concerns. He said he always plans to accomplish more in a film than he is ultimately able — or allowed — to.

"We usually start out with 300 percent and hopefully end up with 150 percent," Edlund said. "We feel that anything that can be drawn up or discussed can be committed to film. Our only enemies are time and money."

Perhaps the person most uniquely qualified to judge both the results of this creative tug-of-war between the emotional and visual elements in *2010* and the film's ability to stand apart from its predecessor is Arthur C. Clarke, the 67-year-old patriarch of science fiction who co-wrote the *2001* screenplay and later wrote the novel upon which *2010* is based.

Clarke's verdict: "I think there was a dull quarter-second in the third reel of the film, but that's about it. It's an emotional, two- or three-handkerchief movie."

Clarke smiled. "When I saw the film I said to Peter (Hyams), 'Stanley (Kubrick) will be jealous.' Peter said, 'That's okay. He can do *Odyssey III*.'"

'2010' proves effective with action, but less so with character, politics

2010 will delight many viewers, younger ones especially, and there's no shame in that. The film offers deftly edited action sequences, enchanting visual effects and an ostensibly uplifting ending. It has "box-office smash" written all over it.

But like so many films that aggressively woo audiences and warily eye the cash register, *2010* is not a particularly intelligent motion picture. Its images of the fiery planet Jupiter may seem three-dimensional, but its characters don't. Its sound is crisp and its score often exhilarating, but Peter Hyams' direction hits more than a few wrong notes.

The story takes up where Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* left off, but the uninitiated need not worry: Hyams awkwardly begins his film with a computer-like catalogue of all necessary background information. Nine years have elapsed since the *Discovery*'s maiden voyage to Jupiter, and a team of Soviet and American scientists, united by mutual need, make a second trip to Jupiter aboard the Soviet *Leonov*.

For the American scientists, the purpose of the mission is twofold: to retrieve from the data banks of the abandoned *Discovery* information about the strange monolith near Jupiter, and to determine what caused the HAL 9000 computer to malfunction, killing the crew of the *Discovery*.

Where Kubrick's concerns were abstrusely thematic, Hyams, whose credits include *Capricorn One* and *Outland*, spotlights the various physical predicaments encountered in the execution of the mission. His film is also more political, venturing so far as to prophesy a military confrontation in Central America.

While Hyams offers no dearth of tense situations, his idea of how to create suspense is disappointingly superficial. He doesn't develop characters whose fates are involving; only Dr. Heywood Floyd, the architect of the past and present mission, is presented in any detail before the action moves to outer space. Rather, Hyams establishes the perilous nature of a situation with close-ups of widened eyes and perspiring foreheads, an ominous crescendo of sound and frenetic camera movement. He appeals

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not to the intellect or even the emotions, but to the senses.

Perhaps the political dimension of the film was intended to flesh out the action. In a sense, it does. It gives the film an emotional immediacy by exploiting the persistent fear in Americans and Russians alike that their governments will never see eye to eye. But the contrast between the conflict on Earth and the cooperation in space is belabored and sententious.

Moreover, Hyams doesn't know whether he wants to adopt a sardonic or somber tone in dealing with the story's politics. When a government official relays information to the American astronauts about heightened tensions in the superpower relationship, he speaks glibly. Later, when he informs them of war, he's downright melodramatic.

The cast is surprisingly strong. John Lithgow, Helen Mirren and Elya Baskin take grossly underdeveloped characters and render them oddly familiar and poignantly human. The eccentricity of Bob Balaban's computer whiz and the earnestness of Roy Scheider's Floyd are arresting. These performances greatly enhance the film but cannot erase its superficiality.

Where *2010* succeeds best is in recognizing the expectations of the two groups to whom it should appeal — *2001* holdovers and a generation weaned on Spielberg and Lucas films — and attempting to satisfy both. The former contingent will be pleased to learn the fate of astronaut David Bowman, while the latter can enjoy some truly state-of-the-art special effects. Both will be tickled by the energy exhibited in some sensational sequences. Neither will be entirely satisfied by the film as a whole.



On the set of the 'Leonov' deck Peter Hyams shows Roy Scheider some special effects.



Matt and Janet — a breath of fresh air.

A NEW MATT DILLON...ON THE MOVE

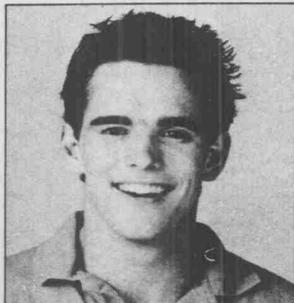
OK, smart guy! What would you do if you were Jeffrey Willis? It's your last summer before choosing between college and jobless oblivion. Now comes a summer dream job at the ritzy El Flamingo Beach Club, a luxurious haunt of the New York rich absolutely dripping easy money and overrun with beautiful girls. You rub more than shoulders with a gorgeous blonde coed visiting from California, you are taken under the wing of the Club's resident "get-rich-quick" artist and, suddenly, college is coming in a very distant second.

So, in September, what will it be? For Matt Dillon as Jeffrey Willis in Twentieth Century Fox's "*The Flamingo Kid*," the decision won't be easy. Everyone has an idea about what he should do with his life — and they're ALL wrong.

Flair for comedy

As the bright but less than "Easy Street" smart Jeffrey, Matt Dillon takes on a role tailored to show the talented young actor in a new light.

Although he is only 20, Matt Dillon has starred in eight films since a casting director found



Matt Dillon is "*The Flamingo Kid*."

the actor at age 14 in junior high school and put Dillon in "Over the Edge" (1978) as a tough street kid. Several top flight roles followed, with Dillon becoming a new symbol of teenage rebellion in "My Bodyguard," "Little Darlings," "Tex," "The Outsiders," "Liar's Moon" and "Rumblefish." But in "*The Flamingo Kid*," there is a new Matt Dillon to be discovered. Sure, he's still a legend in his own neighborhood, but he's a rumblefish out of water with a flair for comedy and a crush on shapely newcomer Janet Jones.

"Dance Fever" star in major film role

The tall, sunny blonde shines in her first major film role after brief appearances in "One From the Heart" and "Grease II." A veteran at age 22 of five seasons on TV's "Dance Fever" team, Janet Jones will follow her role in "*The Flamingo Kid*" by starring in the eagerly awaited film version of "A Chorus Line."

Also starring is a seasoned trio of top performers. Richard Crenna (as slick sports car dealer Phil Brody) recently made his mark in "Body Heat" and "First Blood," and will soon reteam with Sylvester Stallone in a second "Blood" called "Rambo;" Hector Elizondo (as Jeffrey's concerned father) was last seen in the hilarious "Young Doctors

In Love," and Jessica Walter (as the status-conscious Mrs. Brody) is best remembered for asking Clint Eastwood to "Play Misty For Me."

Director Garry Marshall shoots for the stars

For director Garry Marshall, "*The Flamingo Kid*" is a comedy right up his alley. Known for his knack with youthful casts of hit TV shows such as "Happy Days" and "Laverne & Shirley," Marshall



Shapely newcomer Janet Jones.

guides "*The Flamingo Kid*" on the heels of his first hilarious feature, "Young Doctors in Love."

For a dash of summer in the dead of winter, here comes "*The Flamingo Kid*." Your last days before college were never this hot and bothered.