

**KINO LORBER**  
i n c o r p o r a t e d

presents

# FILMWORKER

A Film by Tony Zierra

Official Selection – 2017 Cannes Film Festival

2017 | USA | 94 minutes | Color

**Publicity Contact:**

Sasha Berman  
Shotwell Media  
sashaberman@me.com  
310.450.5571

**A Kino Lorber Release**

Kino Lorber, Inc.  
333 West 39 Street, Suite 503  
New York, NY 10018

## Synopsis

It's a rare person who would give up fame and fortune to toil in obscurity for someone else's creative vision. Yet, that's exactly what Leon Vitali did after his acclaimed performance as 'Lord Bullingdon' in Stanley Kubrick's *Barry Lyndon*.

On the brink of a successful acting career, the young actor stepped back from the limelight in order to become the right-hand man to perhaps the most influential and ground-breaking filmmaker of his time, Stanley Kubrick. Vitali played a crucial part in the director's career, working tirelessly in close collaboration with Kubrick in helping to make and maintain his extraordinary legacy of work.

Vitali's unique working relationship with Kubrick is explored through anecdotes about his candid, funny (and sometimes shocking) experiences with the director, enhanced with a rich variety of previously-unseen archival materials including photos, videos, letters and notebooks from Vitali's personal collection, and brought together through interviews with actors, family, and key film industry professionals who worked with both Kubrick and Vitali. Directed by Tony Zierra, this documentary offers profound insight in to the creative process behind Kubrick's timeless art, as seen through the unique perspective of perhaps his closest and most dedicated collaborator, Leon Vitali, who once described his own occupation simply as "Filmworker".

## About the Film

It's a rare person who would give up fame and fortune to toil in obscurity for someone else's creative vision. Yet, that's exactly what Leon Vitali did when he surrendered his thriving acting career to become Stanley Kubrick's loyal right-hand man. For more than two decades, Leon played a crucial role behind-the-scenes helping Kubrick make and maintain his legendary body of work.

Leon was living the high life as an accomplished, young actor in swinging 1970's London when he was cast as 'Lord Bullingdon' in Kubrick's *Barry Lyndon*. Already an avid Kubrick fan, Leon had once declared to a friend after watching *A Clockwork Orange*, "I want to work with that man someday." Now, he could hardly believe his dream was coming true. It was the chance of a lifetime to take his flourishing career to new heights. But the moment Leon stepped foot on Kubrick's magnificent set, his fate was sealed.

During months of filming, Leon became enthralled by the director's all-encompassing process of creation. After *Barry Lyndon*, prestigious job offers poured in from film, television and stage, but Leon turned them all down to take on the humble role of assistant to the master filmmaker. It would prove to be an extraordinary, intense, often arduous journey that would push Leon to his limit and beyond.

Gone was the glamour and privilege of being a performer. Leon was plunged into a punishing mix of grueling hours and unyielding expectations. Like a medieval apprentice, he learned in meticulous detail just what it took to create and sustain timeless works of art. "People say they'd give their right arm to work with Stanley," Leon says with a knowing smile, "Let me tell you, that's just the down payment." Kubrick was captive to the unending needs of his own creations. He dedicated himself fully to the process, no matter how detailed, difficult or endless the work might be - and he expected nothing less from Leon. Under pressure, their alliance could be fraught with tension, but their bond was unbreakable.

"You have to understand Kubrick before you understand what Leon did, does, and went through - what's imprinted on his soul and mind" says Julian Senior, former head of publicity for Warner Bros., Europe. "He did for Kubrick what half a dozen executive producers, associate producers, production managers, drivers and tailors do on other movies."

Leon's responsibilities were so vast and varied they were impossible to categorize. On travel documents, Leon wrote his occupation as: Filmworker. "That's what I am," he says, "I'm a filmworker. I do whatever it takes to get the job done." In addition to his essential role as Kubrick's creative sounding board, Leon was casting and coaching actors, performing each role in a script so Kubrick could adjust plot and dialogue to his liking, spending endless hours at film labs making sure each print met the highest standards, preparing sound mixes, overseeing subtitling and dubbing, creating layouts for marketing materials, making trailers for international territories, coordinating inventory and shipping, keeping track of global screening schedules, and serving as a diplomatic liaison between his often volatile boss and the outside world. Leon worked hands-on with all of Kubrick's films. Constant demand for worldwide special screenings, television broadcasts, and the burgeoning home video market made it necessary for Leon to absorb each movie frame by frame, beat by beat, until seeing them through Kubrick's eyes became second nature.

On what would turn out to be Kubrick's final film, *Eyes Wide Shut*, Leon was run ragged carrying out double duties. Not only did he attend to countless production tasks, he also gave a stellar performance as the imperious 'Red Cloak'. The experience of both assisting and acting for the master brought things full circle. Kubrick's sudden death in the midst of putting the final touches on *Eyes Wide Shut* left chaos in its wake. Without Kubrick's unassailable leadership, confusion reigned, and long simmering resentments within his circle bubbled to the surface. Exhausted, ill, and grief-stricken over the loss of the man whose dynamic presence had been his driving force for decades, Leon threw himself into a tough, constant and sometimes losing battle to keep Kubrick's uncompromising standards alive.

When Warner Bros. decided to painstakingly restore Kubrick's films, they turned to Leon as the one person who could uphold the late director's creative ideals. After decades of working by Kubrick's side, Leon had become a master who understood the rigorous method of transforming mundane details into a magnificent vision. He was the crucial link for all involved - from audio engineers, to colorists, to lab technicians to restoration specialists, who drew on his depth of hard-earned knowledge. The Herculean restoration process lasted years and insured that Kubrick's legacy would be safeguarded for generations to come.

Without a doubt, Stanley Kubrick is a legend; his name is synonymous with the pinnacle of cinematic achievement. Every day, all over the world, his films are screened, streamed or broadcast. Hundreds of thousands of visitors in countless countries flock to exhibits about him, intrigued by every artifact from his exceptional career. Yet, the most valuable icon to survive the fire of Kubrick's brilliance is a living one: Leon Vitali - assistant to the director.

True to character, Leon isn't seeking accolades or worldly reward as he continues to share his unsurpassed knowledge of all things Kubrick. Living simply, he's sustained by his dedication to creativity, and the understanding that the path he chose led to remarkably rich experiences. By wholeheartedly helping Kubrick realize his grand and beautiful dreams, Leon became the embodiment of all the filmworkers who play a vital part in bringing great cinema to fruition. Leon's story is uniquely his own, but this chronicle of one artist who chose to serve another stands as a testament to the legions of unsung heroes whose names shine for a brief moment as the credits roll.

## Director's Statement

**Filmworker** is one of those rare projects that every storyteller dreams of finding, complete with a fascinating main character, controversy, and a built-in emotional arc. As a young man, Leon Vitali went in search of the ultimate creative experience - and he found it. Stanley Kubrick is cinema. He embodies the struggle to manifest everlasting work that pushes the boundaries of an art form. Everyone who was pulled into his orbit was fundamentally changed. Kubrick, in service to his own creativity, was the force who issued the challenge: “Are you willing to give everything you have for the cause?”

Leon Vitali was one of the few who eagerly answered “yes” - and lived up to that commitment, despite the price he had to pay. As Kubrick aficionados we were well aware of Leon Vitali: assistant to the director. We admired his great performances in *Barry Lyndon* and *Eyes Wide Shut* and we knew he had been a key member of Kubrick’s inner circle for many years. When we finally met Leon through our work on another related project, we were struck by his kindness, humility and the fascinating scope of his story. Here was a man who had been a successful actor at a young age, but had given up his high-profile, glamorous life to work tirelessly behind-the-scenes for Kubrick. What compelled him to make such an unusual, self-sacrificing choice? **Filmworker** explores the bittersweet consequences of Leon’s life-changing decision, and the fierce reality of working closely with one of the most brilliant yet demanding artists in cinema history.

Because of Leon’s sensitive, self-effacing nature, it took a while to get him to agree to let us tell his story. He was used to being a spokesperson for Kubrick’s work but was uncomfortable opening up about himself. More than a year of intensive shooting allowed space and time to explore Leon’s life in-depth before, during and after Stanley Kubrick. His vivid memories and often overwhelming emotions rose to the surface in unpredictable waves as he recounted his years with the great director. Then there were Leon’s boxes stored in the attic that turned out to be a treasure trove of Kubrick-related photos, documents, memos, videos, notebooks and memorabilia. As Leon dug through them, unearthing one fascinating artifact after the other, it was like exploring the archaeology of what great masterworks are built from. We carefully examined everything and found rare and exciting materials to incorporate into the film.

**Filmworker** is an observation on how legends and legendary works are created. The complex, productive and interdependent relationship between Leon Vitali and Stanley Kubrick was founded on devotion, artistic passion, sensibility, sacrifice and the grueling joy of the creative process. We’re honored to bring this heartfelt human interest story and important part of cinema history to the audience.

## FILMWORKER Participants

### Leon Vitali

'Lord Bullington' in Kubrick's *Barry Lyndon* and 'Red Cloak' in *Eyes Wide Shut*. Graduate of London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art. Gave up his flourishing acting career to work for decades as Kubrick's trusted right-hand man. Supervised the meticulous restoration of Kubrick's films for Warner Bros.

### Ryan O'Neal

'Redmond Barry' in Kubrick's *Barry Lyndon*. Star of many award-winning films including the classics *Love Story*, *Paper Moon* and *What's Up Doc?*

### Matthew Modine

'Private Joker' in Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket*. Award-winning actor with many acclaimed roles in film and television including the current Netflix hit series *Stranger Things*. Author of the popular *Full Metal Jacket Diary* containing extraordinary photos and a detailed account of his two years filming with Kubrick.

### R. Lee Ermey

'Gunnery Sergeant Hartman' in Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket*. Military icon, weapons spokesman and writer of *Gunny's Rules* and *Mail Call*.

### Danny Lloyd

'Danny Torrance' in Kubrick's *The Shining*. Left show business to become a biology teacher and family man. Lloyd's participation in **Filmworker** adds something special to the project since he very rarely grants interviews.

### Stellan Skarsgård

One of the most versatile and sought after actors of our time. Has appeared in countless mainstream and independent films including *Good Will Hunting*, *Breaking The Waves*, *Insomnia*, *The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo* and *Nymphomaniac*. Worked with Leon Vitali on the Swedish film adaptation of *Hamlet*.

### Marie Richardson

'Marion' in Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut*. Internationally acclaimed for her roles in theater, film and television. Worked extensively on stage directed by Ingmar Bergman.

### Tim Colceri

'Doorgunner' in Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket*. Originally cast as Gunnery Sergeant Hartman in *Full Metal Jacket*.

### Brian Capron

Popular British actor known for *Coronation Street*, *EastEnders* and numerous other television, film and theater roles. Attended London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA) with Leon Vitali.

### Pernilla August

Renowned Swedish actress, director and screenwriter known for her work in Ingmar Bergman's *Fanny and Alexander*, Bille August's *The Best Intentions* and as 'Shmi Skywalker' in *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace*. Worked with Leon Vitali on the Swedish film adaptation of *Hamlet*.

**Julian Senior**

Legendary Head of European Regional Advertising and Publicity for Warner Bros. for 30 years. Worked closely with Kubrick on publicity for all of his movies.

**Lisa Leone**

Photographer, Cinematographer, Director. Worked closely with Kubrick in many capacities on *Eyes Wide Shut*. Author of the book, *Here I Am*, a photographic journey through the history of Hip Hop.

**Brian Jamieson**

Award-winning director, producer, film preservationist and publicist. Worked closely with Kubrick promoting his films as Head of International Marketing & Publicity at Warner Bros. Director of *To Whom It May Concern: Ka Shen's Journey*. Co-founder of the company 'Twilight Time', specializing in releasing limited edition classic films on DVD and Blu-ray.

**Chris Jenkins**

Three time Academy Award-winning sound engineer who has worked on over 160 films. Shares the 2004 'President's Award' of the Cinema Audio Society with Leon Vitali and Ned Price for restoration work on Kubrick's films.

**Nick Redman**

Producer, director of *A Turning Of The Earth: John Ford, John Wayne and The Searchers*, *A Simple Adventure Story: Sam Peckinpah, Mexico and The Wild Bunch*, and *Becoming John Ford*, Film and music preservationist. Co-founder of the company 'Twilight Time', specializing in releasing limited edition classic films on DVD and Blu-ray.

**Ned Price**

Vice President of Restoration, Warner Bros. Has overseen more than 1,600 film restorations including *The Wizard of Oz*, *Ben-Hur* and Kubrick's body of work.

**Steve Southgate**

Senior Vice President in charge of European Technical Operations for Warner Bros. Worked closely with Kubrick from *A Clockwork Orange* all the way to *Eyes Wide Shut*.

**Treva Etienne**

'Morgue Orderly' in Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut*. Known for his roles in *Pirates of the Caribbean: Curse of the Black Pearl*, *Black Hawk Down*, and *Falling Skies*.

**Mike Alfreds**

Celebrated theater director and actor. Known for his work with Sir Ian McKellan who has called Alfreds "one of the three best directors in the country". Author of *Then What Happens?* about the art of storytelling in theater. One of Leon Vitali's most important acting mentors at LAMDA

**Warren Lieberfarb**

Former President of Warner Home Video. Lieberfarb is widely acknowledged for his industry changing role as the architect of the DVD. Authorized the massive restoration of Kubrick's films.

**Colin Mossman**

Former head of Deluxe Labs. Academy Award-winning inventor who designed and developed many systems for facilitating film restoration and improving quality control. Kubrick's go-to guy for lab work.

**Jacob Rosenberg**

Filmmaker, author, and digital technology expert. Director of the documentary *Waiting For Lightning* about pro skateboarder Danny Way.

**Phil Rosenthal**

Writer, producer and creator of *Everybody Loves Raymond*. Winner of 2 Primetime Emmys for Outstanding Comedy Series.

**Max Vitali**

Leon's son. Director and cinematographer. Instrumental in creating the stunning music videos for international music star Robyn.

**Vera Vitali**

Leon's youngest daughter. Stockholm-based star known for her roles in *Monica Z*, *Blind*, and *My So-Called Father*.

**Masha Vitali**

Leon's eldest daughter. Photographer, event producer.

**Janet Wilson**

Respected Telecine Colorist for many Warner Bros. classics. Worked closely with Leon Vitali during the restoration of Kubrick's films.

**Beverly Wood**

Executive Vice President of Technical Services & Client Relations for Deluxe Entertainment. Master chemist and lab consultant for countless films including *The Hours*, *Monster's Ball*, *The Lord Of The Rings: Return Of The King*.

**Chris Vitali**

Leon's Eldest Brother

**Tim Vitali**

Leon's Brother

**Maria Hayward**

Leon's Sister

**Stanley Kubrick**

Director: *Killer's Kiss*, *The Killing*, *Paths of Glory*, *Spartacus*, *Lolita*, *Dr. Strangelove*, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *A Clockwork Orange*, *Barry Lyndon*, *The Shining*, *Full Metal Jacket*, *Eyes Wide Shut*.



## Director and Producer Biographies



### **Tony Zierra, Director**

Director Tony Zierra has always been fascinated by the power of storytelling and cinema. His first documentary, *Carving Out Our Name*, follows the lives of four actors hoping to find success in Hollywood. The film premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival to much acclaim. Next, Zierra went on the road to capture America's reaction to the attacks of September 11th. The film that emerged, titled *USA The Movie*, explores the cyclical nature of violence and retaliation. Zierra's award-winning documentary, *My Big Break*, is a cautionary tale about the darker side of celebrity and the consequences of

fame that also includes his struggle to make his first film. *My Big Break* won 'Best Documentary' at The Boston Film Festival, 'Best Documentary' at Artsfest, was nominated for 'Best Documentary' at the Raindance Film Festival in London, and was an Official Selection of The American Cinematic Experience Festival in New York. Zierra's most recent project **Filmworker** tells the story of Leon Vitali, Stanley Kubrick's right-hand man. **Filmworker** premiered at the Cannes Film Festival in 2017 and was nominated for the *L'Eil d'or*.

### **Elizabeth Yoffe, Producer**

Producer Elizabeth Yoffe is head of the production company True Studio Media. She worked as a casting director for many film and television projects including David Lynch's classic series *Twin Peaks*. In Los Angeles she served as president of Cinewomen, a non-profit organization dedicated to advancing the role of women in film. She is the producer of *USA The Movie* and the award-winning documentary *My Big Break*. She also produced the award-winning Independent Film Channel favorite *Brightness* starring Eric Idle, and co-produced the Toronto International Film Festival Official Selection *Carving Out Our Name*. She recently produced **Filmworker**, the story of Stanley Kubrick's devoted right-hand man which had its debut at The Cannes Film Festival 2017. Yoffe's work as a freelance writer has appeared in *The New York Times*, *Slate*, *The Week*, *Natural Health* and *Healing Journal*.



**With**  
Leon Vitali

**Featuring in order of appearance**

Ryan O'Neal  
Brian Capron  
Mike Alfreds  
Nick Redman  
Brian Jamieson  
Danny Lloyd  
Matthew Modine  
R. Lee Ermey  
Tim Colceri  
Julian Senior  
Warren Lieberfarb  
Steve Southgate  
Lisa Leone  
Jacob Rosenberg  
Max Vitali  
Vera Vitali  
Masha Vitali  
Stellan Skargard  
Pernilla August  
Chris Vitali  
Tim Vitali  
Maria Hayward  
Colin Mossman  
Phil Rosenthal  
Marie Richardson  
Treva Etienne  
Ned Price  
Chris Jenkins  
Janet Wilson  
Beverly Wood

**Crew**

Director: Tony Zierra  
Producer: Elizabeth Yoffe  
Camera and Editor: Tony Zierra  
Additional Footage: Lisa Leone  
Original Music: Luke Jennings, David Ben Shannon  
Original Artwork: A.C. Yoffe  
Moth 3D Animation: Andy Taplin  
Motion-Graphics/Animation: Will Paguntalan  
Digital Colorist: Ray Ruotolo  
Sound Facility: Bisby Studios  
Sound Mix: Chris Jenkins, Sal Ojeda  
Associate Producers: Tracy Shoolman, Emily Clancy

Editing Assistants: Joana Zein, Alex Lewis, Adam Keller, John Clavier  
James Gillum, Max Kopelowicz, Max Perez

*2001: A Space Odyssey* Room filmed at The 14th Factory, Los Angeles

Photographs Courtesy of Matthew Modine's *Full Metal Jacket* Diary

Producer & Photography Archivist: Adam Rackoff, [www.fullmetaljacketdiary.com](http://www.fullmetaljacketdiary.com)

Additional Photographs courtesy of: Tony Hayes, Masha Vitali, Stephen Lane, propstore.com

Distribution Advisory Services: Cinetic Media

Legal Services and Fair Use Consultant: Donaldson + Callif, LLP

Special Thanks:

Brian Jamieson, Ned Price, Amelia Moffie, Bonnie and Steve Clancy, James Acheson, Jay Cohen,  
Ryan O'Neal, Matthew Modine, Chad Lindberg, Lisa Moffie, Mitchell Adams and Kevin Smith,  
Brenda and Colin Mossman, Emily Yoffe and John Mintz, Jennifer and Jim Noonan,  
Barbara Jordan, Jane Evans, Eric Aijala, Saul and Rose Moffie, Frank Castle, Rich Castle,  
Chris Jenkins, Jacqueline Taite, Greg Hodal, Alexandra Case, Dianne Vitali, Jamey DuVall,  
Dorothy Chaplin, Vivian Shoolman, Marina Keegan, Joanne Murphy, Broc Jackson, Justin Yoffe,  
Simon Birch, Ben Hocken, Barbara Kuhl, Field Notes, Jim Coudal, Doug Yoffe, Buff Headwear,  
Ann Hopkins, Warner Bros., The Kubrick Estate, The Vitali Family, Andrew Willden, Galal Albana,  
Shelley Mitchell, Craig Higgins, Stanley Kubrick and Filmworkers

In Memory Of  
Steve Southgate (1950-2016)