

A PINWOOD DIALOGUE WITH MATTHEW MODINE

Actor Matthew Modine gives one of his best performances in Stanley Kubrick's landmark Vietnam drama, *Full Metal Jacket* (1987). In the film, Modine plays Joker, a wisecracking military journalist trying to maintain his cynical veneer and his sanity amid the mayhem and carnage of warfare. In his book, *Full Metal Jacket Diary* (2005), he pairs his personal journal with his candid photographs from the set, offering an intimate portrait of the life-changing film production. This lively conversation with Modine at the Museum of the Moving Image, which accompanied a book signing and a screening of *Full Metal Jacket* as part of a Stanley Kubrick film retrospective, offers rare insight into Kubrick's techniques in directing his actors.

A Pinewood Dialogue following a screening of *Full Metal Jacket*, moderated by Chief Curator David Schwartz (June 17, 2006):

SCHWARTZ: We're very delighted that he's here with us today, so please welcome author, photographer, and actor Matthew Modine. (Applause)

MODINE: Thank you.

SCHWARTZ: There will be a book signing afterwards, so you can get your own copy of his remarkable book, *Full Metal Jacket Diary*. So tell me about when this—or tell *us* about when this book was done. The film, of course, was in production in 1985 and 1986. You obviously were taking a diary at the time, but when did you decide to make a book?

MODINE: Well, I never decided to make a book. A friend of mine gave me a camera, a Rolleiflex camera, and he told me that Stanley Kubrick had a photographic background. He was a photographer—how many filmmakers are here tonight in the audience this afternoon? How many actors? Actors *and* filmmakers? (Laughter)—Well, anyway, so Stanley was a photographer for *Look* magazine. He grew up right here in New York. And [my friend] said, "This might be a great way to break the ice with your relationship with Stanley Kubrick, if you knew how to use this old Rolleiflex camera." So I taught myself to use it, because I was nervous about meeting Stanley Kubrick, and the first thing he did when he saw the camera, he said, "What are you doing with that old piece of junk?" (Laughter) Because this was an old camera.

And he talked me into purchasing a big, like a whole—he told me what lenses to buy, what camera body to buy, what camera bag to buy, what film stock to buy... And I hated everything that he told me to buy, but I fell in love with this old box camera. He allowed me to take pictures on his set—which was kind of unheard of, because he was so protective of his sets, and the imagery, and the information that might come from his sets. But he was impressed with my photography, and I gave him prints, as I did, I think, just about everybody—every photograph in the book, that's a photograph of somebody, has one of the prints from the book, from when I was making the film. It broke the ice—I've got to say, I'm not a bad photographer! (Laughter)

So I always wanted to do something with the photographs, and when I presented the book to this person to publish them, he wanted me to caption the photographs. And I said, "Well, I kept a journal while I was making the film—a diary, as an exercise, as an actor—because I was playing a writer." And so I kept this journal. You see me using it a couple times in the film. And so when I transcribed the diary... The diary was actually kind of this extraordinary—it explained the experience of a young man going off to work with this legendary filmmaker, with his wife, who became pregnant, and the birth of his first child, and the extraordinary circumstances and difficulty of working on a film set with such an extraordinary genius and demanding filmmaker.

SCHWARTZ: You tell an amazing story in the book about the day that your wife had a C-section delivery. You had to get permission to leave the set—because they were all waiting for you, and you were supposed to be shooting—but your wife was about to have a baby.

MODINE: Yes, yes. (Schwartz laughs) I knew that I wasn't going to film that day. It was when they were shooting Dorian Harewood, "Eightball," who's the first person to go into that square and get shot by the sniper. Stanley was shooting him, literally. And I said, "Look, my wife's having an emergency cesarean." My son was being born, he was seven-and-a-half months, so it's quite early to have a child born. And I was begging him to let me leave the set so I could go and be there with my wife during this surgery, and... If Stanley was nothing, he was practical. (Laughter) And he said, "Well, what are you going to do there?" (Laughter) You know, "You're not a doctor. They're going to cut her open, you're going to pass out from all the blood. You're just going to be in the way. You'll probably fall on the doctor, and he'll stick the scalpel in your wife's eye." And I said, "Look, I've got to go. You've got to let me go." And he said, "No." I took a pocket knife out of my hand, and I said, "Look, either you let me go or I'm going to cut my hand open, and I'm going to have to go to the hospital. It's your choice." And it was kind of an extreme, crazy thing to say, but we'd been filming, at that point, for about six or seven months. Well, not "Filming" filming, but we'd been together for about seven months. All in all, the film was almost...almost two years to make that film. I was starting to come unglued. And with the pressures of my newborn, I had to do something kind of dramatic. I had to promise Stanley that I would be back to the set *immediately* after the birth of my son, which I did. I stopped, I picked up some cigars, and I came back and passed them out. And he said, "Oh, great. What's his name?" And I said, "Bowman." He goes, "Aw, you can't call him Bowman." (Laughter) He criticized the birth of—my son's name, you know? (Laughter) I said, "Well, what should I call him? Stanley?" And so we had a fight about the name of my son...

SCHWARTZ: A lot of people have asked about what it's like to work with Kubrick. One incident you have in the book is you go to meet with Alan Pakula, because you did a film with him [*Orphans*] after *Full Metal Jacket*. And he said, "What is he like to work

with?" Why do you think there's such curiosity about what Kubrick is like? Underlying this question is sort of the idea that it must be horrible to work with him, that he must be sort of this tyrant who just has people do hundreds and hundreds of takes for no good reason.

MODINE: It's a good question. I mean, I'm always asked. I was asked about it when I was making the film, after the film.... I could usually see on somebody's face when they're approaching me, what question they're going to ask: "What was he like?" The diary helps to, in some interesting way, answer that question. There's a wonderful book that was written by Michael Herr, that was taken from a small thing that he wrote when Stanley died, in *Esquire* magazine. I can smell Stanley when I read Michael's writing, because Michael's a real writer. He wrote the book *Dispatches*, he wrote the voiceover for *Apocalypse Now*, and he wrote the screenplay from Gus Hasford's book *Short-Timers*, and this. He's an extraordinary writer, and you really feel him. I open the book talking about Stanley, and how difficult it is to talk about him; to respect his privacy. One of the most difficult things to keep in life is a secret. Stanley was very good at that. And it's a difficult thing to share with the world, that book; the ideas in that book. And I'm so blessed, I'm so thankful that when Stanley Kubrick's daughter, Vivian, who was so close to him—she made a wonderful documentary, if you ever have an opportunity to see it, about the making of *The Shining*. It's a documentary she made when she was fifteen, sixteen years old. You should see it; it's extraordinary documentary...

SCHWARTZ: It's on the DVD. It is with the DVD of *The Shining*.

MODINE: ...And she thought the book was fantastic. She said, "My concern is that the only people that might understand it are people who are artists, or people who've suffered to try to make themselves understood. She said that some people might read it and think that it's... it's something else. But her, and Leon Vitali, who was in—he was Stanley Kubrick's assistant for, I think, almost twenty years. He worked on *The Shining*; he worked on *Eyes Wide Shut*; he worked on *Full Metal Jacket*; and he starred in *Barry Lyndon* (he was the boy who shot Ryan O'Neal and made him lose his leg)—he gave me his blessing, he thought it was fantastic. Even

"Whispering" Eddy, the soundman, called me and said how much he enjoyed the book. Vincent D'Onofrio loves the book. And you know, these are all people that I talk about in the story. And I was so relieved to have them say how much they liked it because... I mean, I take myself to school in the story as much as anybody else, but... I don't know what I'm talking about!

SCHWARTZ: Well, the book paints a very complicated picture, because you talk about what comes across as the control aspect of Kubrick; that he wanted to control everything. But you also show him as being very open to ideas. One real interesting thing that's sort of through-line throughout the book is the ending. He would always ask you, "What do you think of the ending?" He sort of knew the ending that he had intended, where your character dies, wasn't working.

MODINE: Well, I don't know. I mean, originally, in Gus Hasford's book, in the screenplay, Private Joker dies. In that final Mickey Mouse march, there were mortar fires that started to go off. We never filmed it, but that was always the intention in the script, in the story: it was that Joker would die. When those mortar fires start going off all around them, the voiceover says something like, "Your feet tell your head to pick your body up, to run from that which pursues you." "You know... "And then my thoughts drift back to Mary Jane Rottencrotch..." and all that stuff. And then Joker sees himself as a little boy, running, with a wooden rifle, and playing soldier. And then it cuts back to Joker as a man. And then back and forth and back and forth between the boy and the man. Until finally, the boy, who pretends to be shot, falls in mock death; cutting to Private Joker dying in real life, and kind of freeze framing, like in the very famous Spanish Civil War photograph of Frank—Capa? What's his name?

SCHWARTZ: Robert Capa.

MODINE: Robert Capa's. That photograph, where the person's caught in death—which they say was staged now. But who the hell cares? It's a great photograph. (Laughter) And Stanley never liked that ending. He never said that; he never said that specifically, "I don't like that ending." But he said, "What do you think of the ending?" I said, "Well, I really love it. I think it's a great ending. It shows the

terrible waste of war; the loss of life, of youth." He said, "We'll keep thinking about it." And we had a rule. You go into the trailer, which was a—you see it in the story; it's such an honor to get invited into a director's trailer—and in particular, to get invited into Stanley Kubrick's trailer, and to sit down and have a cup of coffee with Stanley Kubrick. And he was making it. It was like watching Albert Einstein play with test tubes and stuff like that (Laughter) because it was this extraordinary... "You like coffee?" "Yeah, I like coffee." "Do you like African coffee?" And he mixed up all these things; mixing, and doing this, and doing that... And I felt like I'd never had a cup of coffee before. And then he said, "Let's have one rule. Is that there can't be any bad ideas. You know, if we're talking about something and you don't like what I say, just say, "Yeah... or we could do this.'" He says, "That way, it'll keep things moving forward in a positive fashion. So don't ever say something is stupid or dumb, because where do we go from that?" Kind of good advice, right? Well—I don't know if I should tell them the story, because it's kind of... it'll just going to kill it! (To audience) But... You want me to tell you this story? Then you don't have to buy the book! (Laughter)

SCHWARTZ: (Laughs) Well, there are still the nice pictures in the book.

MODINE: There are still nice pictures in the book... So he kept asking me this, he kept asking me this, he kept asking me this. And it was sometime after the birth of my son. And I was still angry at him for having called my son—that he didn't like my son's name. And Leon Vitali came and says, "He wants to see you in the trailer." So I said, "Okay, what does he want to talk to me about?" "Well, you're going to have to find out." And I went in the trailer, and there were three other actors in the trailer. Now, there hadn't been any other actors in the trailer for seven months. It was just me and him in the trailer. And I was immediately jealous that Stanley had brought these guys into the trailer. (Laughter) And it was Arliss Howard and Adam Baldwin and Kevin Major Howard, "Rafterman," who shoots the sniper at the end.

And he said, "You know, Matthew, I've been asking you for almost seven months now what you think of the end of the film, and you haven't been able to give me one alternative ending. Now, I just asked

these three guys, and they all have alternate endings. (Laughter) Go ahead, Adam."

And Adam tells me this story... Well, first it was Arliss. Arliss told me this story about how he's not going to be dead. You know, "You think that I died in your arms, man. But you know, I just... I wake up, and we're both inside of an army tent hospital, and I look at you, I say, 'Hey, Joker, wake up.' And you open your eyes. And I say, 'I know you're just... joking!'" (Laughter) 'Heyyy!'" You know, kind of something like that. And Stanley's pulling on his beard and scratching his head.

And he goes, "Adam, tell him yours." And Adam, he says, "Okay, we're back stateside, and you're, like, driving your car, and you got your laundry in the backseat, and you drive into one of those little mini-malls; you're going to take your clothes into the dry cleaner. You come in, you put your pile down, and you're kind of getting your wallet out, and you hear me say, 'Semper Fi.' And you look up, and it's me. And I say, 'Hey, Joker.'" (Laughter) And now I'm so pissed off and angry at these stupid ideas, and I'm really biting my tongue (Laughter) because I don't want to say, "That's the stupidest fucking thing I've ever heard in my life." And then Kevin Major Howard started telling his story, and I couldn't even hear him; I couldn't even hear what was coming out of his mouth. And then I turned to Stanley and I said, "Well, Stanley, I guess you could shoot them all... Then you'd realize how stupid they are. Then we'd re-shoot them, like we have with the rest of the fucking movie!" (Laughter)

I couldn't believe that had come out of my mouth! I was trying immediately to grab the words and put them back in. Have you ever been in a car accident, or got hit in the head really hard, and your head's ringing? And I just—I didn't even say goodbye, I just walked out of the trailer, and... "I can't believe what I just said!" And Stanley called me, he called me a part of the female anatomy that begins with a "c" and ends with a "t" for about—it's a word that the English use that we don't use, really, here in America; but the English use it, and it's really hard, and it's blunt. He called me that, a miserable "... for about two months. (Laughter) And then he came up to me one day, and I was really angry about something. And he said, you know, "So, have you been thinking about the end of the movie?" (Laughter) And I said, "Yeah, Stanley, I

have. I have been thinking about the movie." And of course, I hadn't been; I hadn't been thinking about it for two seconds! And I said, "Yeah, I have. He should live. He should go through boot camp, and he should see the drill instructor, who's trying to teach him how to save his life, get shot and killed. He should live. He should go through boot camp and see this guy stick a rifle in his mouth and blow his brains all over the latrine. He should come to Vietnam, and the one guy that he knew from boot camp should die in his arms. And then he should have to stand over this young girl and take her life. He should live. He should live, and have to spend the rest of his life with those images in his mind, because that's the real horror of war: to come home after all that." And Stanley's eyes got really black, and—that really scary face that he makes; that picture that we all know—he started looking at me like that, and pulling on his beard, and he said, "That's the end of the film." And I don't know if he was waiting for me to discover it? If it was something that he and Michael Herr had discussed...?

SCHWARTZ: It fits with his some of his other films: endings that are ambiguous, that leave a sort of question mark with the idea that, well, surviving is about all you can do. So it is a perfect ending.

MODINE: Yes. Nobody has been able to tell me—and he can't, because he's not with us anymore—what the ending of that... Maybe he was just waiting for me to discover it. (Laughs)

SCHWARTZ: one thing that I said at the beginning of the film, and I think it's really true, is that the thing that's underrated about Kubrick—because he's often talked about as being all about style and technique—is that he's great with actors. This film is really about these performances. It's about the transformation of your character. Going from the war face in the beginning, in the boot camp scene, to the face when you have to shoot the sniper. That carries the film. And that's an acting moment. So I think he's great with actors.

MODINE: I agree. I mean, one of the things he said, "Why do people always accuse me of doing so many takes and taking so long to make movies? It's not my fault, it's the actors. (Laughter) They never know their lines." And I thought, "What the hell is he talking about?" I get called out in the film. I got

caught on a day where we changed the shooting schedule, and suddenly they were trying to figure out something to shoot, and they decided, "Oh, we can shoot the rifleman's creed." And I didn't know it. And it's really an embarrassing moment in my life. I will never show up on set and not know, like, the whole script, just in case they change the scenes, because it was really, really humiliating. When I came home after *Full Metal Jacket*, there's a guy named Marvin Minsky who wrote a book called *The Society of the Mind*. And in the book, Marvin Minsky is trying to explain how we learn—how the brain functions. And he gives an example of, like a child that discovers that, you know, this is their world, like this. And then they suddenly realize that this thing is attached to them. And then one day they discover that their foot is the end of their body, and this is the beginning. And then when they start reaching out into the world; you know, knocking things over, to a point where they can pick something up and then spill it all over their face. All that process that a baby goes through, of being able to get to a point in your life where you have a cup of coffee, and you can stumble and not spill it on the people in the front row of the theater, because you know how to tamp your hand and not have that happen. That comes, that kind of motor skills, from experience.

And that's when Stanley was talking about knowing your lines, that's how he wanted actors to know their lines. And he loved British actors, because often times American actors work on the characterization, the history; and the last thing that an American actor is usually taught in school is to go to the lines. And British actors, I think, on the other hand, use the lines to lead them to the same place that Americans arrive, you know; but in a different direction. Start with the lines and find the character, instead of finding the character and then going to the lines.

Did you guys ever hear the story about Dustin Hoffman and Laurence Olivier making *Marathon Man*? You know that story? Yes? Is it worth telling it, or...? (Laughter) I love the story, because neither one is right. They're both right. There's a really great movie John Schlesinger made called *Marathon Man*... do you know the story?

SCHWARTZ: No, I don't remember it.

MODINE: So Dustin Hoffman's terrified that he's going to work with Laurence Olivier: this great, great actor. And there's a scene where he's been locked up down in a basement, and it's cold, and he's wet. And the next day, they're going to film the scene. So Hoffman decided to stay down in this basement overnight, in wet clothes, to prepare for this scene where Laurence Olivier comes in and starts inspecting his teeth and asking him, "Is it safe?" Do you know the scene? It's a great scene. "Is it safe? Is it safe? Is it safe?" So Laurence Olivier was really excited to meet this young American actor from *The Graduate*, this charming boy. So he was really excited to meet Dustin Hoffman. And so he's coming in with all of his happiness and joy. Meanwhile, he's playing a Nazi. But he's not coming in as a Nazi; he's coming in as a happy Englishman, coming to meet this young American actor. And now these two legendary actors meet. And Dustin Hoffman is soaking wet and shivering, his lips are blue. And Laurence Olivier's reaction is, "Oh, my God! Somebody get him a blanket! Somebody get him a cup of tea! What's going on? I don't understand!" And Dustin tried to explain, in a very simple way that, "No, this is my preparation. It's all for the scene and everything." And Laurence Olivier is kind of standing there dumbfounded, and looks at him, blank-faced: "My dear boy. Why don't you just try acting?" (Laughter) You know? Yes. But you know, in my opinion, they're both right. I mean, if Laurence Olivier can give that performance that he does in *Marathon Man*—that's just terrifying—he's right. He didn't need to do what Dustin Hoffman did. But Dustin Hoffman is equally brilliant in the scene. So... You know, so long as you arrive at the same place of giving a great performance—and you don't cause a lot of trouble on the set, and stop the production, and cause a lot of suffering to the people that are working on—you know, the crew members—on a film, I think that you have to... because you're trying to capture something on film.

SCHWARTZ: So what was it like for you? For example, with that last scene where you have to pull the trigger: Was it more like Hoffman or Olivier for you? How did you get to that point?

MODINE: That last close-up. I asked Stanley about that close-up. I said, "What did you do to the close-up? Did you do something optically? Did you slow it down? Did you do something?" He goes, "No, man, that's all you." Because there's something

that's kind of surreal about that last close-up: the thing leading up to pulling the trigger, and then pulling the trigger, and the people's voices that are the things that are happening around me... I don't know.

I do know that... There was a time when I was thinking about being a big movie star. And I thought, "What is it that big movie stars have in common? If I was to sort of approach this as a scientist, and make a periodic chart of actors, you know, and sort of place them on the thing..." So I have John Wayne here, and Cary Grant there, and Gary Cooper, and Cagney, and Fonda, putting all those guys up on that periodic chart—Mel Gibson and Stallone—big stars, you know; people that you'd say are certifiably big stars. And I said, "Now, okay, now scientifically, how do I, if I were going to try to find something that each of those people have in common...?" Well, they're all wonderfully photogenic, and they all have nice speaking voices. And now, what is the movie that made each of those guys a big star? And as I was going through it, I found out something kind of horrible that they all kind of had in common—which the exception of a few, like Cary Grant. What do you think it was? They all killed somebody. In the movie that made them into a big, big star, they took somebody else's life. Whether it was *White Heat*, with Cagney: he was in jail for having been a knucklehead. And Henry Fonda beating a guy's head in with an axe-handle in *The Grapes of Wrath*. John Wayne: take your pick, whichever movie; he's killing people all the time. Mel Gibson: *Mad Max*. Tom Cruise: *Top Gun*. And killing, really, the best thing we could've killed in the eighties: killing them damn Commies! (Laughter) That Red Threat... Even Sigourney Weaver: you know, killing the alien. Bette Davis: Come on, help me; what is the Bette Davis movie? She killed... I mean, *Baby Jane*, that was a great one where she killed people. Yes, *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane*? But you can make your own periodic chart and prove me wrong, but I kind of found that, and it made me sick to my stomach. So when I got to *Full Metal Jacket* and I was going to have to take this girl's life, I thought, "If I'm going to take this girl's life, there's one thing that I really want to do. I want to splash blood onto the audience, so that they feel the loss of that person's life; that there's nothing that's... *nothing* great about taking another human being's life. You know? I mean, that it's a *horror* that we... You know, the

great thing about *Full Metal Jacket* is, after all these years—I don't know what it was like today when you watched, but when the drill instructor gets shot in the toilet, did anybody feel like, "Yeah! That fucking guy deserved it?" Did anybody feel that? You did? Because I think that... Yes, he's just—but Ninety-eight percent of the people that see that film know that all that guy's trying to do is teach them, so that they don't get killed; that they know that somehow, that the thing that he's training them to do is to kill, so they don't get killed. That great Patton quote that I don't remember what it is. It's like, about killing somebody else's kid, not your—you know that? It's a really great quote. Does anybody remember it? Does anybody remember it? "Yeah, that other bastard. Kill that other—that's their job, yeah."

SCHWARTZ: Well, that's the subject of the film, is the process that has to take place for boys to grow up and, you know, get into a position where they can kill. I mean, that's sort of Kubrick's whole idea. And also, Lee Ermey's character's a father figure. There's a sympathetic side to him, and there's the sense that he's a father figure. The film, like many of Kubrick's films, has grown in stature and appreciation over the years, so it's—what's your experience like? I mean, now that we have twenty years of perspective on it? Because it's a film that I think has only sort of gained in recognition. When it came out it was, I think, right around when *Platoon* came out. Certainly, I think this is a movie that holds up better.

MODINE: I think there are films that stand the test of time. And I think that *Full Metal Jacket* is—because of Stanley Kubrick's genius—it has. There's something really weird about the performances, I think, in the film. There's something—but I think that that's part of what Stanley was trying to do. There's a line in the film, "The phony tough and the crazy brave." And I think that that could sort of be what you could say about the performances in the film: there's kind of this phony tough and crazy brave.

SCHWARTZ: Did you bring some of the idea of doing the John Wayne voice to the film?

MODINE: Well, it was in Gus Hasford's book, that...

SCHWARTZ: Yes, references to John Wayne.

MODINE: Yes, he was always—Joker was always doing this kind of John Wayne impersonations. And I only had one. It was that first one. “Ils that you, John Wayne? Is this me?” And I always loved that in the book. So there was a scene when I meet Animal Mother in the pagoda, and we almost get in a fight. What was written was that he sticks his M-16—or I mean, he comes over and he starts to try to make a fight with me. And it was written kind of like a Clint Eastwood scene—and I’m not Clint Eastwood; (Laughs) I can squint like him—where he comes over, and he starts to make a fight with me. And I say, “Look, man, I got twice as many hours in country as you, and if you don’t get out of my face, I’ll fucking blow your brains out.” And I, like, stick my M-16 in his neck. We did it a couple times, and Stanley—I keep saying he pulled on his beard, because he pulled on his beard a lot; and he looked down at the ground. And he said, “Let’s go in the trailer and talk.” And he said, “Where’d you grow up?” And I said, “I grew up in Utah.” “Yeah, you were born in California.” “Yeah, I was born in California; I grew up in Utah.” And he said, “What would you do if some guy like Animal Mother started to give you a hard time?” I said, “A guy like Animal Mother?” “Yeah, a guy like Animal—big, strong guy.” I said, “Well, I’d make a joke.” He says, “You’d make a joke? The guy’s a big guy, he’d kick your ass.” I said, “No, no; not a guy like Animal Mother. He’s all wind; he’s not a threat. If Animal Mother was a smaller guy, I would be scared.” Because the worse fights I ever had in my life were with smaller guys. You get that low center of gravity, powerful legs, punch you in the jaw. You know, Mike Tyson—all that power was in his legs; he’d come up and hit you in the jaw. But big guys, they’re easy to take down. And he said, “I can’t believe it!” “Yeah, I’d make a joke.” He goes, “Oh; that’s interesting. Did you read any jokes in the book, that we might be able to use in this?” And I said, “Oh, yeah.” And so we—Stanley and I were drinking that really strong African coffee, flipping through Gus Hasford’s book, and trying to find something. I said, “You know what’d be really great is if I could use one of those John Wayne things.” And we found that one in the thing, you know, “Well, only after ya eat the peanuts outta my shiit.” (Laughter) And so that was one of those times when we massaged the script into something else that suited; where Stanley was really good with actors, and feeling the freedom to say, “Okay, look, this is stupid, it’s not working”—without saying

“stupid,” though—“This isn’t working. Let’s change it. Let’s make it something that fits, fits me.”

SCHWARTZ: I won’t make you give away the jokes, but you tell a few long jokes to Kubrick in the book; It’s never clear if he actually found them funny or not.

MODINE: Yes.

SCHWARTZ: But I guess we’ll never know. (Laughs) Let’s take a few questions, before we go outside for the book signing... Did Kubrick discuss his political view or was it pretty much clear?

MODINE: I never discussed politics with him. A lot of sports—he loved baseball and football—but never politics. I have no idea where he stood politically—or religiously. I mean, I don’t think that Stanley ever had any intention of trying to make an anti-war film or a pro-war film. He just wanted to hold the mirror up to society; you know, to hold it up and just kind of have a look at ourselves. I think that Stanley could have said, “Before you go pointing the finger at somebody and saying they’re the bad guy, have a good look at yourself. Have a good look at your own country’s history, before you start criticizing somebody else.” You know, Stanley’s often accused of being... that his films are cold or inhuman. And I find them quite the contrary. I think that they’re the most humanistic films that I’ve ever seen; that humanity is one of the greatest inventions that we’ve ever come up with. Because that animal history is just there, just right behind us., and every opportunity it has to come out and bite somebody, or punch somebody, or go to war with somebody, it comes out. That we really have to struggle if you’re going to really live up to those ideals of humanity. And I think that that’s something that Stanley was saying with a lot of his films. For me, *2001*’s about a lie that just... you know, it’s about lying, and programming something not to understand what’s a lie and what’s not a lie. And then if you start lying to the machines, the machine’s going—because it doesn’t have that kind of thing that humans have. It’s either 0 or 1.

SCHWARTZ: What’s Adam Baldwin like? (Laughs)

MODINE: What do you mean? I mean, we had a good time together. After I shot the sniper, there was a scene where Adam was supposed to chop

the girl's head off, because he's jealous that people say to me, "You're hard, Joker. You're born-again hard." And he gets really jealous, and so he takes his machete out and chops the girl's head off. And he picks her head up and he holds it to all of us and says, "Hard? Who's hard now, mother fuckers?" and throws the head over. We filmed it, but Stanley said it just was inappropriate. It wasn't necessary, after the horror of seeing what Joker had just gone through, taking that girl's life, and that it was inappropriate. But yes, I don't know what Adam's like. I think he's a nice guy. He's from Chicago, he... (Laughter) I think he was really good in *My Bodyguard*. (Laughter)

SCHWARTZ: I guess you don't get asked that a lot, what Adam Baldwin is like.

MODINE: No, I never—that's the first time in my life anybody's ever asked me what Baldwin's like! (Laughs) Yes, I don't even know where Adam Baldwin's at. I don't think I've seen Adam Baldwin in the twenty years since we made the film.

SCHWARTZ: How was your character's heart able to stay open, despite all the experiences that were going on?

MODINE: We didn't make any real progress—we didn't really get any traction—for about three months while we were making the film. I never felt like we were accomplishing anything. And I had the responsibility of being the star of Stanley Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket*. Before, I had the above-the-title billing. It said: "Matthew Modine in Stanley Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket*." He asked me to take it off the top, and put it down with everybody else's. And I felt it was appropriate to do that, because it was an ensemble film. But while we were making the film, and I was starring in Stanley Kubrick's film, and we weren't making any progress, your ego kind of starts to get scared and think, "I'm failing him. I'm not providing him with what he wants." It had nothing to do with me, but you think that. And I was out in a field one day, and I was feeling really bad. And I saw Stanley driving up in his Jeep and I said, "Oh, shit." And I tried to hide behind some blades of grass. (Laughs) And he saw me, and he drove over, and he goes, "Hey, what are you doing? Come on, jump in. I'll give you a ride to the set." I said, "Oh, no; that's okay. I'll walk over." And he goes, "What's wrong?" And I said, "Oh, I don't

know..." (Laughter) And I said, "I don't... I feel like I don't know what I'm doing. I don't know what it is you want. I feel like I don't know how to play Private Joker." And he kind of looked at me, pulled on his beard, and shut the car off, the Jeep. And he said, "I don't want you to *play* anything. I just want you to be yourself." (Laughs) "Okay, that's right. I'll just be myself, that's right." And he said, "Come on now, jump in. I'll give you a ride to the set." And I said, "No, I'll walk." And when he drove away, I knew that the important part of what he had said was, "I want you to be." And that became *really* evident when Lee Ermey—who was the technical advisor, who played the sergeant, the drill instructor—Lee Ermey was the technical advisor on the film. And there was an actor that was hired to play the drill instructor, and he was supposed to audition all of the other actors. We were filming Vietnam, and then we did boot camp. So he was supposed to practice and get in shape and you know, practice his lines, and audition all of the people that were going to be the extras in the background. And he'd get in front of the camera—everything was being videotaped—and he'd do it for five or ten minutes. His name was Tim Colceri. He's a wonderful actor, and he ended up being the guy that's in the helicopter, shooting civilians, saying, "Get some, get some, har-har-har!" You know, that, "How do you shoot women and children?" "Easy, you just don't lead 'em as much." That guy, he was the drill instructor. And he'd do it for five minutes, and his voice would get sore—because it hurts to yell like that for a long time—and he'd leave. But they still had extras to audition. So Lee Ermey would get in front of the camera and start auditioning these people. And the difference was that Tim Colceri was like, (gruffly) "Hey, what's your name, soldier?" And then you had Lee Ermey going, (shouts) "What's your major malfunction, soldier? What are you lookin' at? You wanna fuck me?" You know, and he started doing all that stuff. And then Stanley looked at the videotapes, and you had this other actor—and it was kind of not fair, because that guy wasn't auditioning, he was just learning his lines and getting in shape. But Stanley saw somebody who was acting something, -thing—and then he saw somebody who was. "I just want you to be yourself." That's what Stanley was after, was that "to be". You know, to get that point where the lines are in you, like that cup of coffee I talked about that you don't spill. That it has to be inside of you. And if it's not, then... Maybe that's what that thing was

about the end of the film, of pushing me and pushing me and pushing me, to get me to understand that Joker had to live. That that's the horror of war, of having to spend the rest of your life—whether it's the First War, the Second War, Korean War, Vietnam War, Gulf War, that... I think that there're a lot of soldiers, a lot of police officers, a lot of firemen who the nightmare of their life is the things that they have to carry around with them in their recesses.

SCHWARTZ: A story about Kubrick saying something about the difference between working with him and working with other directors?

MODINE: I never heard Stanley talk about it. I heard Arliss Howard—yes, Arliss said, when he was saying goodbye to Stanley, after we'd finished... [Kubrick is] not an affectionate guy. He's not somebody who grabs you and... You know, it's kind of this [distance]. I reached down to help him up one time. I talk about it in the book: that I put my hand down to give him a hand up when he was trying to find a shot. Just put—you know, just like you would if you were playing basketball and you wanted to help somebody up off the floor. And

when I put my hand out, all of a sudden it was like this tough, Jewish kid from the Bronx, who got up and was like, you know, hitching his pants up like, (Laughter) "You think I need your help? I don't need your help. Get away from me!" (Laughter) And it was—he was so strong and so cocky and... So Arliss was trying to say goodbye to him, and he said, "Yeah, well, Stanley, I'll see you later." And Stanley said, "You know, you're going to miss me." And Arliss said, "Yes; yes, I am. I will. I'll miss you." He goes, "No, no, you're going to really miss me, when you're working on a set, and the director calls, 'Cut! We got it. Let's move on.' And you're going to know that you *don't* have it, and that we shouldn't move on. And you're going to miss me, because you know that I would never cut and say, 'Let's move on,' unless I knew we had it. And you're going to miss me." And Arliss said the first time that he went to work on another film and the guy said, "Cut, we got it, let's move on," he said, "I really miss Stanley."

SCHWARTZ: Okay, well thank you so much for sharing this... (Applause)

MODINE: Thanks very much.

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