

## **Shocking Cinema: A Clockwork Orange – Stanley Kubrick.**

A Clockwork Orange tells the story of Alex, a teenage boy who spends his time with his gang of thugs, the Droogs, engaging in ultra violence, rape, and fights with other gangs. These scenes in the film are quite shocking to watch, particularly the first display of violence in the film where Alex and his Droogs violently attack a homeless man with canes. The violence and rape scenes in the film are presented in a way that shows that violence is exciting and fun for Alex and the Droogs.

Alex's only non-violent pleasures are listening to the music of Ludwig Van Beethoven, & drinking drug-laced milk called moloko at the Korova Milk Bar. Alex is shown to be irreverent and abusive of others; he lies to his parents to skip school and has an expensive stereo sound deck blasting a classics recordings collection.

Alex is soon faced by an attempted coup by two of his subordinate Droogs, Georgie and Dim. Alex is slightly threatened, but seemingly deals with the problem by kicking the Droogs into a decorative urban pool as they walk along the "flat block marina" and slashes the back of Dim's hand, demonstrating his leadership and unwillingness to be overthrown.

That night, Alex is caught during a burglary, a mutinous set-up by his ill-contented Droogs. Alex breaks into a woman's house and uses a phallic sculpture to beat (and accidentally kill) the owner. Alex is then attacked by his Droogs, hit in the head with a milk bottle and left helpless at the scene of their crime to be caught by the police. After being arrested, he learns that his robbery victim has died, making Alex a murderer. He is sentenced to 14 years in prison, where he behaves well in the hope of an early release. He even goes as far as to be apprenticed to the prison chaplain, however Alex's only real interest in the Bible is the violent stories, as he imagines himself acting out the battles described in the Old Testament. The chaplain is taken in by Alex's act but the prison warden, an old-fashioned disciplinarian, is not.

Another option promises Alex a quicker and easier way of getting out of prison, which is the experimental Ludovico treatment, a kind of aversion therapy that "cures" criminals of their violent urges. Alex undergoes the treatment, which makes him physically sick at the prospect of violence, even violence that is in self-defence. The treatment itself is presented as shocking, as the technique involves being exposed to extreme depictions of on-screen violence under the influence of a nausea-inducing drug. Alex is unable to look away from the screen and has his head held immobile and each of his eyes held open by small specula.

During a test of the technique, Alex is found incapable of acting in self-defence and also incapable of touching a naked woman.

As a result of the treatment, when Alex is released he finds himself helpless and soon becomes a victim of both his own former victims and of police brutality by his former gang members.

Laura Craig

Alex is reduced to a less than human level by the state, which the film makes clear, is a force just as evil as Alex's ultraviolence but more subtle and dangerous. .

The Minister uses Alex as a guinea pig in the Ludovico treatment. He is not concerned with Alex's well-being and only cares about the success of the treatment, as it will lead to re-election of his party.

One of Alex's early victims, a writer, uses Alex in the same way. He is in the opposition party. He and his allies hope that the failure of the Ludovico treatment will discredit the administration and allow their party to win. To this end they torture Alex until he tries to commit suicide. An unintended side effect of the Ludovico treatment has been to give Alex the same aversion to music as to violence. So it is Alex's beloved Beethoven that they use to torture him.

In destroying Alex's capacity to commit evil the State also destroyed his capacity for the only non-violent joy he had. And just as the State turned Alex from victimizer into victim, it turned what had been his only innocent pleasure into his greatest fear. Locked in a room with the sound of Beethoven's Ninth booming up through the floor below, a desperate Alex tries to end his pain the only way he can, by killing himself.

One of the film's central moral questions is the definition of "goodness". After aversion therapy, Alex behaves like a good member of society, but not by choice; his "goodness" is involuntary and mechanical, like that of the titular clockwork orange. In prison, the chaplain criticises the Ludovico Technique, saying that true goodness must come from within. Another theme is the abuse of one's liberties – both by Alex and by those using him for their various ends.

In conclusion, A Clockwork Orange is a shocking film because it is ultraviolent, sexually explicit, and surreal. What adds to the shocking elements of the film is its message, which is which is vigorously anti-state. The unintended destruction of Alex's capacity for enjoying music symbolizes the State's ignorance of human nature, and of the consequences of its own decisions. The message of the film is that the State cannot be trusted, as all the people involved overstepped their boundaries e.g. the police, the therapist and the prison.

In the end the audience are encouraged to feel sympathy for Alex because he has had his right to choose taken away and can no longer defend himself. The disturbing and violent imagery in the film is used to facilitate its social commentary on psychiatry, youth gangs, and other topics in a futuristic society.