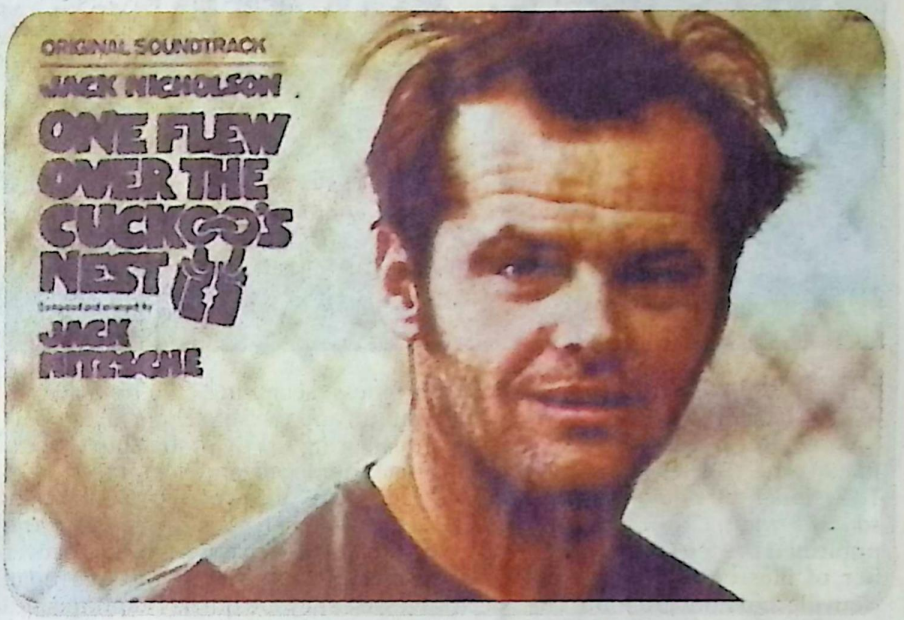
One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest

Review By Shamma M. Raghib

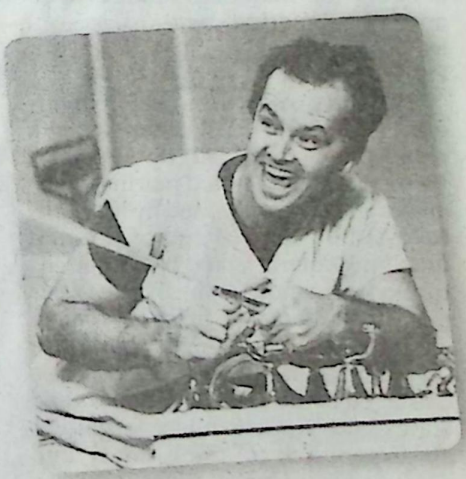


Director: Milos Forman
Cast: Jack Nicholson, Louise Fletcher, Christopher Lloyd, Danny DeVito, Brad Dourif, Vincent Schiavelli.
Runtime: 133 minutes
Rating: PG
Campus Classics Rating: 8.8/10
Awards: Won 5 Oscars. Another 28 wins & 11 nominations

A brilliant movie star Jack Nicholson, played the character of the ill-fated convict Randle Patrick McMurphy. McMurphy is assigned in a mental asylum not for mental illness but because he's resistant to authority. In the past he's been arrested for assault, fighting, statutory rape -- he may be criminal, and he may deserve to be in jail, but he's certainly not insane. He was just too much work for the prison guards, "'cause I don't sit there like a goddamn vegetable," he says.

The brilliant storyline makes you love the McMurphy character, and at the same time, you wouldn't want to invite him over to dinner. McMurphy takes one look at his fellow asylum-mates and comes to those folk's rescue. The Chief needs to come out of his shell. Stuttering Billy (Brad Dourif) needs the touch of a woman to gain confidence. And everyone in the asylum needs to break on through to the other side - maybe go for an impromptu fishing trip or take part in a pick-up basketball game. Acting as a coach and self-help guru, McMurphy barks out orders and encouragement, gradually building up their damaged self-esteem.

Ruling over the madhouse with a cast-iron gaze is Nurse Ratched (Louise Fletcher), a cold-hearted stickler for bureaucratic rules, which she uses as whips to lash at her patients' self-determination, treating them like circus lions, although most are closer to shivering kittens. Most of Mac's ward mates undeniably have problems, but many of the patients are voluntary -- they can leave when they like. Which brings the question, are they crazy or just afraid to face the real world? Even in the institution, the place where they're supposedly getting some help, patients are electro-shocked and drugged into submission. When I watched this film, Ratched made me wonder that are all mental health institutes treating their madhouse inmates with such inhumanity? Of course you can't take this one instance as a guidebook. However, the director, I must say had done a wonderful job of stirring up emotions and giving us a glimpse of the maddened society.



Director Milos Foreman doesn't tell us the story of a madhouse, but slowly enfolds our reality thinking to those who are far from the general crowd. The devilish McMurphy grin and the cruel Ratched give us stark contrasts of the societal rivals. One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest is possibly one of the most intriguing classics I have seen till now and I bet you will love to watch this one too!