WHAT IS THE WORLD COMING TO?

JOHN BOORMAN TELLS IT LIKE IT WILL BE 300 YEARS FROM NOW IN THE ERA OF

ZARDOZ

THE TABERNACLE
By the year 2293 ALL accumulated knowledge in the history of mankind has been recorded in the ultimate computer hidden in the Tabernacle, the brain room of the Vortex.

THE OUTLANDS
Once it was called the good Earth. Now it is the desolate, exhausted, polluted wasteland all the world has become except for the lush Vortex.

THE VORTEX
An ideal 300-year-old unisex commune formed in 1990 when industrial society collapsed. It is protected by a gravitational force field from the terrors of the Outlands.

THE EXTERMINATORS
A privileged and physically superior group permitted to breed under strict control to fight the Brutals and support the Vortex.

THE ETERNALS
Members of the Vortex. Highly privileged scientists and intellectuals, eternally young, who have learned all the secrets of Life—except one.

THE BRUTALS
The last survivors of the dying world outside the Vortex. They live at subsistence level in constant fear of the dreaded Exterminators.

ZARDOZ
A mountain-sized godhead that looms over the Earth taking from its worshippers the substance of Life and giving them the means of Death.

THE APATHETICS
Victims of the pursuit of perfection, they are Eternals who have found the strain of immortality too great and live only for the one thing their society denies them.

THE RENEGADES
Malicious, embittered offenders in the Vortex who would defy and destroy the establishment—if they could only find it.

20th Century Fox Presents

SEAN CONNERY in ZARDOZ

Also-starring CHARLOTTE RAMPLING

Written, Produced and Directed by JOHN BOORMAN

SARA KESTELMAN And JOHN ALDERTON

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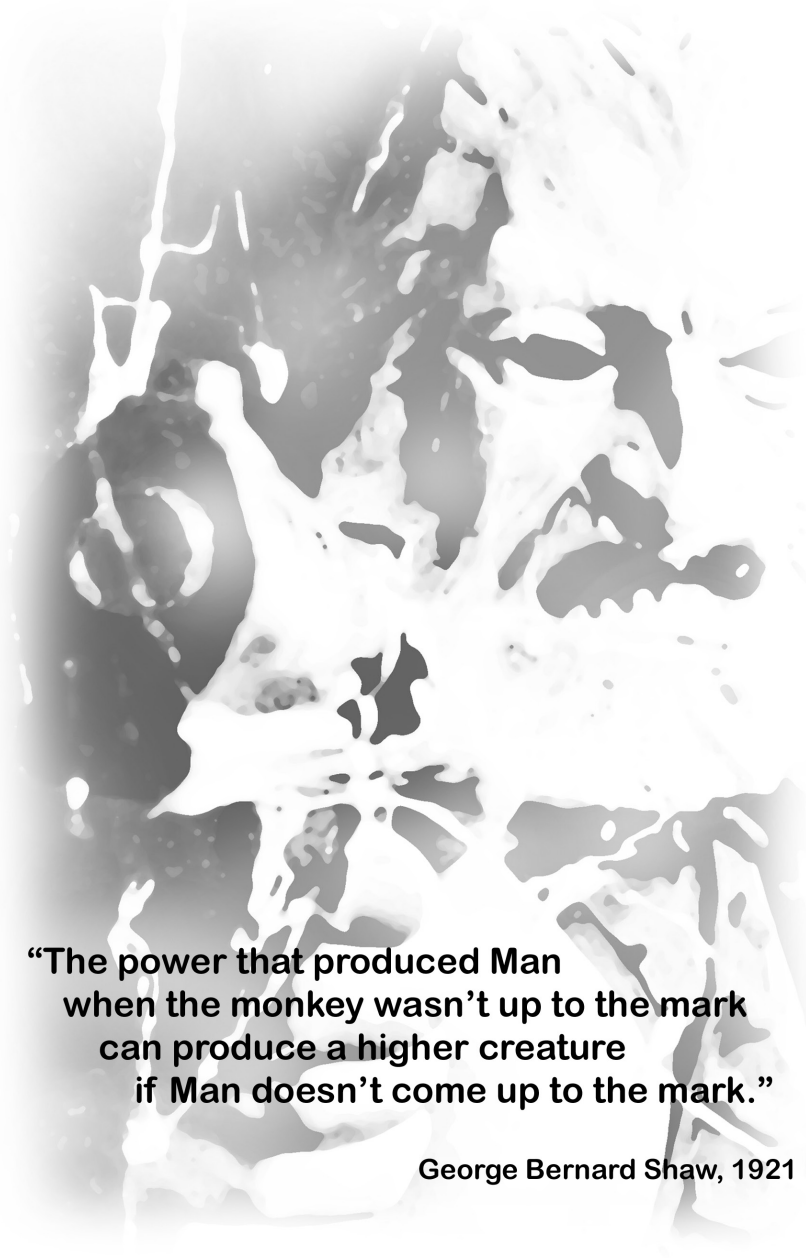

“The power that produced Man
when the monkey wasn’t up to the mark
can produce a higher creature
if Man doesn’t come up to the mark.”

George Bernard Shaw, 1921

John Who?

John Boorman, British filmmaker, was suddenly more successful than he'd ever dreamed he could be. His about-to-be-released *Deliverance* was heading towards huge profits, and people were predicting Oscars. Up to now, in the summer of 1972, he'd been known as the director of the Lee Marvin gangster movie *Point Blank*. *Deliverance* was a survival epic concerning the clash of four city-men with the inhabitants of a stagnant backwater of American society, and with nature herself. The movie was a hard, exciting, thought-provoking experience. Studio heads had heard good news about it early on, and let it be known that they'd welcome film proposals from John Boorman.

Aptly, the story of the story of *Zardoz* began in the unfettered world of sleep: during the tail end of 1971, Boorman had experienced a string of vivid dreams. Always fascinated by how the mind worked, he'd written them down. They were strange ideas: a secluded place where people lived forever; a huge airship floating through the sky with just one man on board; two blind men fighting with walking sticks; a man chasing a girl on a beach and throwing a net over her. . . but there was no story, nothing to connect them.

Living in Los Angeles had shown him that intense, high-speed, "modern" city life, often separated from family, small-town support, and nature itself, was seductive, but had real pitfalls. He'd seen busy, middle-class people with all the new cars, blenders and TVs they could want, consulting psychiatrists because they couldn't feel emotions. Attainment, consumption, and leisure seemed to have an

overdose point. Feelings shriveled, and no amount of fun could lure them back. Since the whole of society was based on people buying things faster and faster, in a world where their movements and preferences were stored in computers, this could only get worse.

He started to write a story. A University lecturer becomes interested in a talented young student. She's bright, socially aware, concerned about the environment, very much a product of the flower-power late-'60s. One day she's gone, moved to a hippie commune in Northern California. Worried, he sets off to find her, experiencing the anti-establishment societies and lifestyles of what was then referred to as the Counterculture.

Boorman drove up the coast to San Francisco to do some research. Most communes seemed to have begun as retreats for idealistic young people who didn't want to be part of conventional society. Many young people couldn't bear to repeat their parents' claustrophobic lives, and some who'd served in Vietnam found it impossible to fit back into the fossilized world they'd grown up in. Communes seemed to offer simpler, more fulfilling lifestyles. Members would usually be required to work and make decisions together, and people of different races and sexes lived in surprising equality. Living inside an extended family had its benefits, and there were very few silly rules about what you could smoke or who you could sleep with. Still, not many communes survived longer than a few years. No matter how consensual the decision-making, someone always rose to the top. Communities based on self-sufficiency, manual work, and generosity prospered, but those rooted in economic or political theories tended to pop like bubbles. Disconnected young people were easily seduced with promises of self-realization and spiritual growth, but most learned to recognize empty bullshit when they heard it, and returned, disappointed, to conventional lives.

Boorman knew that trying to actually get a film onto the screen could take years, and this story wasn't worth that much hard work. . . . yet. But what, he wondered, would the commune situation look like in five years? Could his ideas about people's emotions failing to

keep pace with the technology that surrounded them fit in there too? He started to rewrite the story as a script. Ever since WW2 the possibility of America and the Soviet Union throwing atomic bombs at each other had been a background worry in everybody's lives. What if there was a war of some sort, and the communes were all that survived? Boorman's dreams influenced his story as he pushed it further into the future. Could his secluded place be a refuge of privileged people using space-age technology to protect themselves from a holocaust? Science was already extending lifespans, growing foods in hydroponic farms, and sending manned craft through space … but what would being contained in a landlocked super-ship do to the inhabitants as the ages passed? Could their bodies and minds survive? Would there be people left *outside*, perhaps reduced to a primitive state? Would the people *inside* be likely to offer those survivors help, food, and hearty handshakes? Not likely. So: how would the people at the Top control the people at the Bottom? Boorman, an Englishman who lived in rural Ireland, knew at once: he'd seen how the Catholic Church had maintained control over every aspect of Irish society for generations. His elite group would simply invent a religion.

"From there the story began to emerge, taking on the classic form of the Quest myth, which is the form I tend to work in," he remembered later, "and the idea developed of the character from outside who would penetrate it. He'd be mysteriously chosen, and at the same time manipulated, and I wanted the story to be told in the form of a mystery with clues and riddles which unfold. As soon as I hit on the idea of the mythical hero character, the innocent who finds knowledge, the Merlin/King Arthur relationship came quite easily. Merlin was unable to achieve anything himself. He could only do it through other people."

John Calley, head of production at Warner Bros, a man John Boorman liked, got in touch. It was he who'd originally asked Boorman to write, produce, and direct *Deliverance*. He'd acquired another very hot property: a novel about a young girl becoming

possessed by the Devil. Would Boorman consider making it? Reading *The Exorcist* convinced Boorman that it wasn't for him, but he mentioned his science fiction idea. Calley gave the nod: he'd definitely be interested in reading a John Boorman script.

Who was John Boorman? Where had he come from? Why did Hollywood take him so seriously?

The Loch Ness monster was sighted for the first time in decades in 1933. The Great Depression was at its height. Wiley Post flew solo around the world. China was suffering mass starvation. American scientists suggested harnessing nuclear power. Dachau concentration camp was built in Germany. Yoko Ono was born. The electron microscope, the singing telegram and the chocolate chip cookie were invented. In Camden, New Jersey, the world's first drive-in cinema opened, its first big hit: a fantastical film about a gigantic ape rampaging through New York. . . .

The winter was a cold one in Carshalton, South London, and George Boorman of Rosehill Avenue had to trudge through a snowstorm to fetch a midwife to help little John into the world. George had commanded Gurkhas in India during the '14–18 War, and he never quite shook off the dream of it, as he later toiled in a dreary clerical job. As John grew up, he found his father's conservatism and respect for authority figures oppressive and hard to understand. John's paternal grandfather was a generous, big-hearted man with a mischievous sense of humor. A storyteller, an exaggerator, he was financially impractical but had invented a washing machine, a vacuum cleaner, an ice-cream maker, and various toys (including a nerve-racking Jack In The Box that only jumped out if you pressed the buttons in the right order).

Surrounded by streets of identical semi-detached homes that made her feel claustrophobic, John's mother, Ivy, sought the help of her three sisters to care for him and his two sisters as the War started and Dad rejoined the Army. Enveloped by women, John, now the only male in the house, enjoyed the smotheringly feminine attention he received, but felt acute embarrassment about it. He was an active

kid, but very connected to his own dream world. When he was given a book about King Arthur, an illustration of a hand magically holding a sword in the middle of a lake hooked him forever.

"The heart of the Arthurian legend is the relationship between Arthur and Guinevere and Lancelot," he says. "And that relationship was the same as the one between my father, my mother, and his best friend, whom she really loved. The thing that complicated it for me was that I liked the friend very much. I kind of preferred him to my father in a way, which I felt guilty about. So there was a lot of stuff going on there, and I think it made me very secretive. That triangle with Arthur, Guinevere, and Lancelot crops up in a lot of my work, really. *Point Blank* was the same story. His wife betrayed him with his best friend. So, it obviously went very deep."

His life of going to school, playing, and reading comics while air battles raged silently overhead, was interrupted when a bomb fell on the house next door. His mother decided to move everyone to a riverside bungalow her father owned in Shepperton, a village by the Thames. She'd grown up in his pub on the Isle of Dogs, but when zeppelins started their bombing raids on London, he'd sent his four daughters upriver for safety. A romantic woman in a not-completely-happy marriage, she wanted her children to enjoy the sort of childhood she'd had. John developed an intense love of the river. He swam in it, and drank it, and felt an elemental feeling of peace in it (even when, one day, it nearly drowned him).

The family weren't Catholic, but John was sent to a Catholic school where his Fourth Form master, Fr. John Maguire, started him on the road to being a writer, and much more as well. A powerful, energetic personality, Maguire had little time for authority, but a great love of bringing the truth to his pupils. He sniffed out the creative side of shy little dunce John Boorman and approached his mother: the boy could write, and should be encouraged. She spent her savings on a typewriter for him.

Shepperton was home to a film studio, and camera crews could often be seen working nearby: "They often shot by the river, and I

remember watching and thinking what a good idea it was to rearrange the world so that things came out the way you wanted them," Boorman said later. "My best friend, David, and I, we both wanted to be clapperboys. Being a clapperboy was the highest thing that you could aspire to! We both applied. David got a job, and they turned me down. . . ."

By the time he left school at sixteen he'd realized he wanted to actually make his own films. Running a drycleaning business for a year gave him time to write magazine articles and scripts, and he sent them out to anyone who might read them. A letter arrived from the BBC: would he like to submit some ideas for *Under 20 Parade*, a radio program for young people?

Becoming chairman of the series, Boorman learned as much as he could about art, literature and drama. Having devoured the literary greats, particularly Dostoevsky, Shaw, and Tolstoy, he found a wonderful new world in classic and contemporary cinema. "I was an undiscriminating film critic," he remembered later. "I liked everything!" He created a slot on the show where he could interview film technicians, and haunted the newly-opened National Film Theatre, where he spent days absorbing the impact of silent movie masterpieces.

At eighteen he was called up for two years of national service in the Army, and narrowly escaped being sent to Korea. One evening, he met a German nursing student at a classical music recital. Her name was Christel Kruse, and they started a passionate, commotion-filled love affair that would still be just-about holding them together as *Zardoz* started to take shape twenty years later.

The BBC's monopoly on British TV was broken as Independent Television started in 1955. Their News arm needed bright young people, and J. Boorman was certainly that. A job as a trainee assistant film editor put 16mm celluloid in his hands for the first time, and he started to study the documentary as an artform in itself. Two years later he was directing and editing programs at STV in Southampton. He created and ran their daily topical news show, was responsible