

## THE WORLD, THE FLESH AND THE DEVIL

► This 1959 release, which imagines a post-apocalyptic world with less than a handful of survivors (at least that we can see), was filmed in a seemingly deserted New York City. Writer-director Ranald MacDougall, shown opposite with stars Inger Stevens and Harry Belafonte, not only ponders the aftermath of nuclear devastation, but frames it in a delicately microcosmic drama of race relations.

# The End is Near



By Steve Chagollan

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EVER SINCE THE atomic bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima by U.S. forces all but sealed the defeat of the Axis powers in 1945, people have feared the threat of nuclear annihilation. That fear was

made all the more palpable by the images of destruction in those two cities, with the blinding flash and the mushroom cloud having become burned into our consciousness. When the Soviets, who went from American allies to enemies in the aftermath of WWII, developed their own nuclear capabilities, the idea of mass destruction went from unimaginable nightmare to potential reality. It's this ongoing dread that Hollywood has tapped into in varying degrees over the last 70-plus years—newly stoked by the recent push me/pull you rhetoric volleyed back and forth between Washington, D.C., and Pyongyang.



### DR. STRANGELOVE

► This 1964 black comedy from Stanley Kubrick (bottom left) represents the height of Cold War satire, positing a scenario in which an unhinged brigadier general goes rogue and orders a nuclear strike against the Soviets, and the Pentagon's efforts to reverse this disastrous course. Peter Sellers plays three roles, including the U.S. president, as well as the wheelchair-bound title character—an ex-Nazi scientific advisor whose mechanical hand reflexively snaps into a “*sieg heil*” salute and who occasionally addresses the president as “*Mein Führer*.”



### THIRTEEN DAYS

► The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis—a diplomatic chess game between the Kennedy Administration and the Kremlin under Khrushchev played with potentially dire consequences—is dramatized in this 2000 release directed by Roger Donaldson, shown below with Kevin Costner, who plays White House advisor Kenneth P. O'Donnell. The resolution of the tense standoff is considered JFK's crowning achievement as the nation's commander-in-chief.



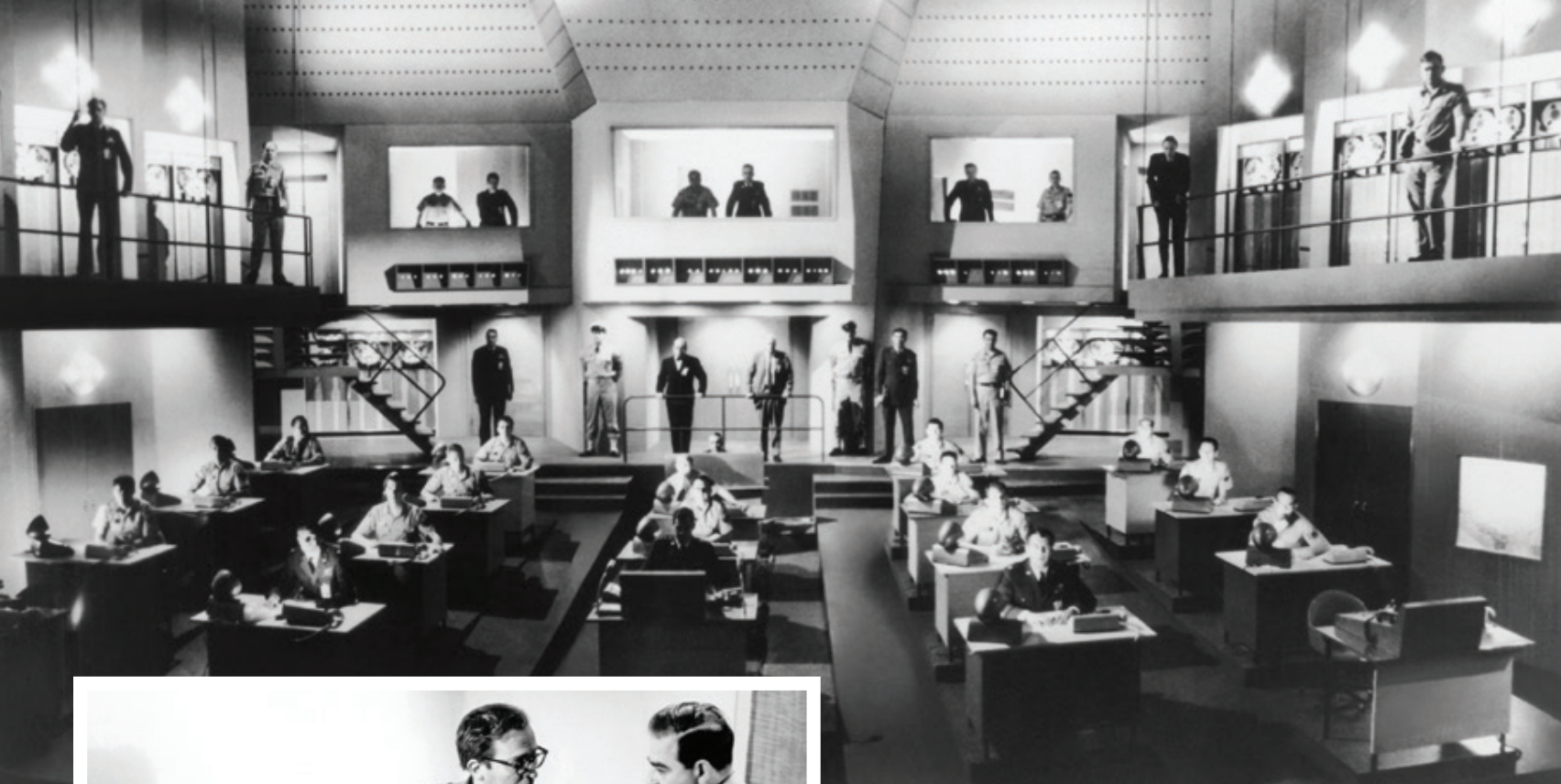
“The whole thing achieves a tingling speed and irresistible tension.” — *THE NEW YORK TIMES ON SEVEN DAYS IN MAY*



### SEVEN DAYS IN MAY

► This 1964 thriller, set in the not-so-distant future (the early '70s), imagines the unimaginable: a takeover of the White House by hawkish military leaders who distrust the Russians after the president signs a nuclear disarmament treaty with them. As directed by John Frankenheimer (with Fredric March, above), “the whole thing achieves a tingling speed and irresistible tension,” according to *The New York Times*.

PHOTOS: (TOP & BOTTOM RIGHT) EVERETT, (TOP & BOTTOM LEFT) PHOTOFEST, (OPPOSITE) EVERETT



**THE PEACEMAKER**

► This inaugural 1997 DreamWorks release, directed by Mimi Leder, near left, centers on the hijacking of ICBMs by a rogue Russian general, and the efforts by a nuclear expert (Nicole Kidman) and a special forces officer (George Clooney) to stave off potential mass carnage. *The Washington Post* said Leder “delivers a movie with hard edges, brilliant narrative drive and some gut-rending violence.”

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**FAIL SAFE**

► There must have been something in the air in 1964, since *Fail Safe*, directed by Sidney Lumet (center left), was the third major release of that year to consider the consequences of a nuclear showdown with the Soviet Union—this time as the result of the accidental triggering of a thermonuclear air strike on Moscow. Spoiler alert: Things don’t go so well for either country as the president deals with the fallout through an eye-for-an-eye sacrifice.

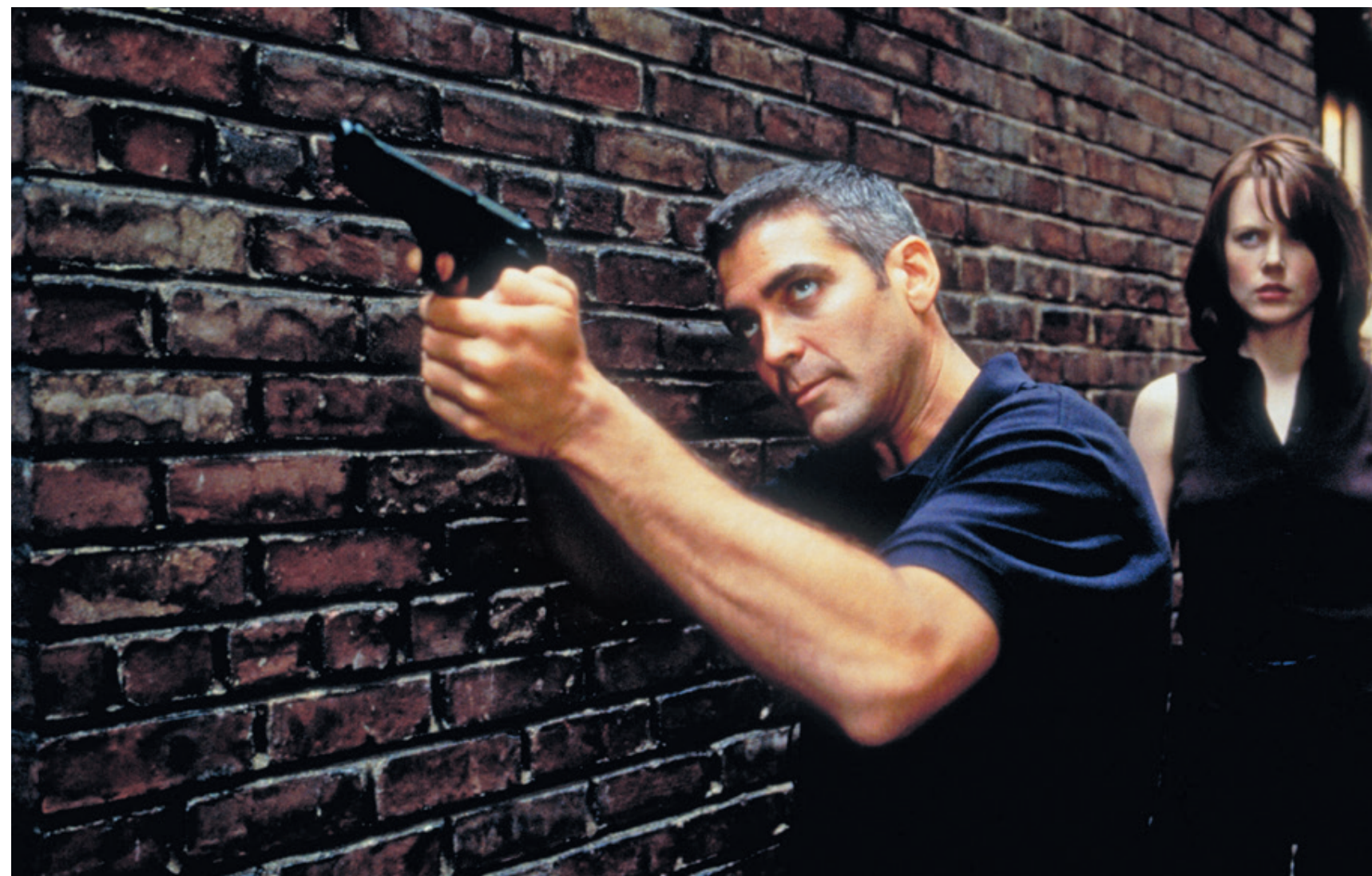


**WAR GAMES**

► As in *Fail Safe*, computer error again translates into a potential nuclear holocaust as a NORAD (North American Air Defense Command) supercomputer can’t tell the difference between a simulated air strike, triggered by an unwitting hacker, and a real one. In the Reagan-era release (1983), directed by John Badham, above left, tension builds and crisis is averted.



PHOTOS: PHOTOFEEST, (TOP) MYLES ARONOWITZ



## TESTAMENT

► This might be the most oblique of nuclear holocaust films, focusing as it does on an ordinary suburban family before and after a nuclear strike, the details of which are superseded by how a community deals with the radiation fallout that slowly but surely takes its toll. Anchored by a poignant performance by Jane Alexander and matter-of-fact conviction by director Lynne Littman, *Testament* (1983) makes universal catastrophe personal.



*The Day After* sparked an international debate on nuclear weapons and “psychologists warned against allowing young children to watch the show.” — **LOS ANGELES TIMES**

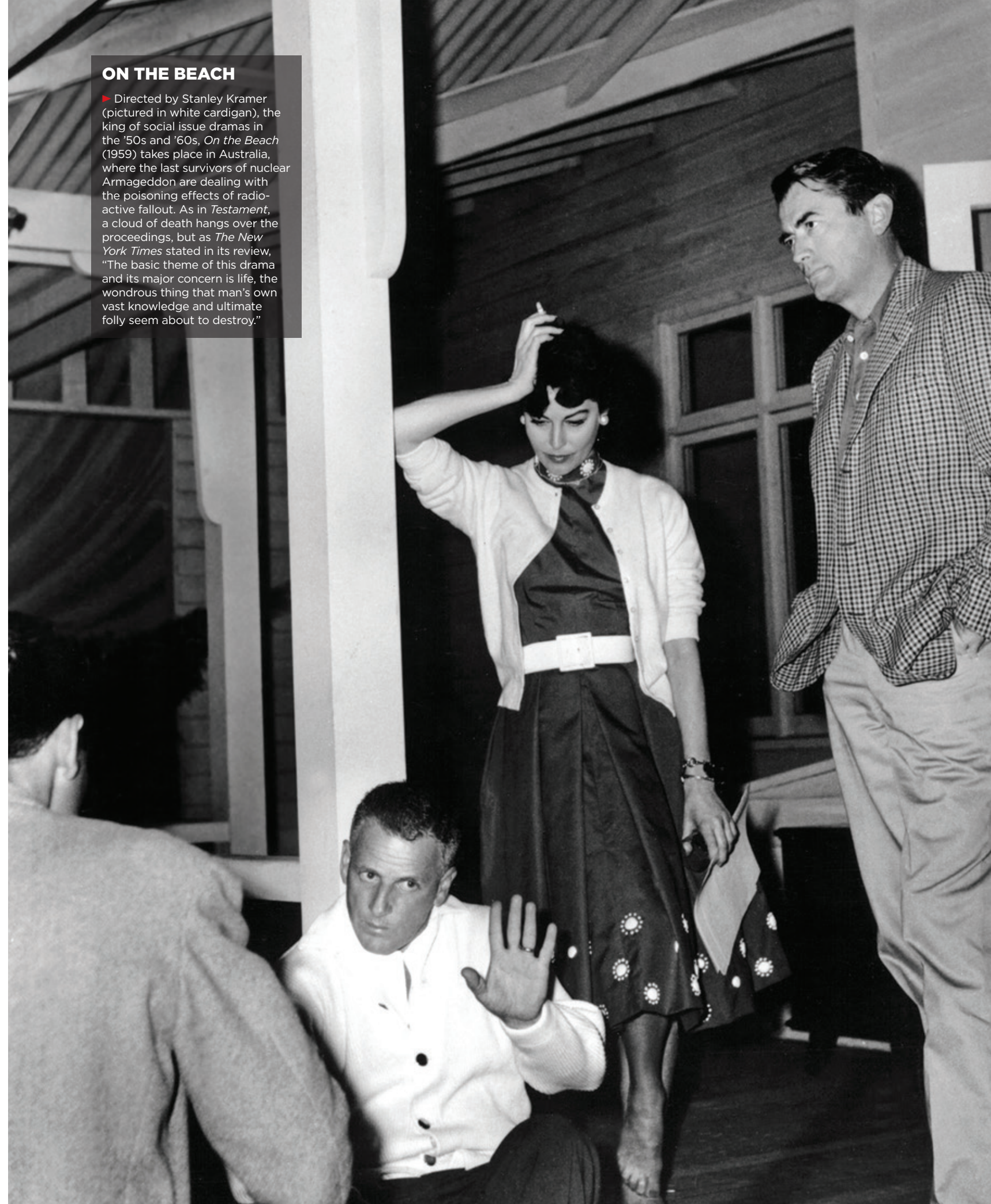


## THE DAY AFTER

► This Reagan-era TV movie, directed by Nicholas Meyer, struck a national chord, having been viewed by more than 100 million people when it initially aired in 1983. The story follows several characters in the Midwest before and after a series of nuclear strikes between NATO forces and the Warsaw Pact countries, shown with graphic, brain-searing force in cities and rural plains across the U.S. As the *L.A. Times* reported, the film sparked an international debate on nuclear weapons, and “psychologists warned against allowing young children to watch the show.”

## ON THE BEACH

► Directed by Stanley Kramer (pictured in white cardigan), the king of social issue dramas in the '50s and '60s, *On the Beach* (1959) takes place in Australia, where the last survivors of nuclear Armageddon are dealing with the poisoning effects of radioactive fallout. As in *Testament*, a cloud of death hangs over the proceedings, but as *The New York Times* stated in its review, “The basic theme of this drama and its major concern is life, the wondrous thing that man’s own vast knowledge and ultimate folly seem about to destroy.”



PHOTOS: (TOP LEFT) COURTESY OF LYNNE LITTMAN; (TOP RIGHT) EVERETT; (BOTTOM) PHOTOFEEST; (OPPOSITE) EVERETT