



**MOON-RAKER:** Space Station Command where Roger Moore's Bond (right) saved the day; inset, Adam's original sketch

# The man who set up 007

Within the space of a couple of years, Ken Adam conceived two of the defining looks modern cinema. In 1961 he took the script for a low budget spy thriller called *Dr No* and created the expansive hybrid of mock-Baroque lairs and high-tech bunkers which has dominated Bond movies to this day

Then, for Stanley Kubrick's *Dr Strangelove*, he twisted the idea inside out and delivered the cavernous War Room. The enduring cinematic image of Cold War paranoia, it was an infinitely more sinister locale for world-threatening megalomania.

It was also very convincing. "When Ronald Reagan became President," Adam reports, "he said: 'I want to see the War Room - you know; from *Strangelove*.' And he was, after all, an ex-film actor!" The room has now been recreated for an exhibition of Adam's work at London's Serpentine Gallery giving admirers - unlike Reagan - the chance to experience it first hand.

Sitting in his Knightsbridge home and punctuating his words with stabs and waves from a sizeable

cigar; Adam, now 78, recounts amazing stories of how as an affluent youth he fled the Nazis to become an RAF ace, before rising to be one of the most influential production designers post-war cinema has seen.

Klaus Adam was born in Berlin in 1921. His childhood ("a typical sort of upper bourgeois, liberal Jewish family") was peppered by encounters with the famous and influential, such as the groundbreaking architect Mies Van Der Rohe, who worked on designs for a new sports store for the Adam family business.

In 1934 the family was forced to flee to Britain, and Klaus became Ken. "The British always underestimate themselves," he says. "It was a most unbelievable country to come to - being able to speak freely was a great experience for me."

At 17, Adam went to study architecture at Bartlett School and, when the war began, started designing air raid shelters and civil defence manuals. But he was keen to do more: "I was firing off letters to the RAE but I was still a German citizen so they kept refusing me," he recalls. To his bemusement, his

persistence eventually paid off; and he found himself embarking on dangerous bombing raids over his former homeland with the 609 West Riding Squadron.

"It's funny because I'm not a courageous person, but the British commanding officers had an incredible psychology of treating everything like a game of rugby" he says. "Or possibly cricket - which was just as well, because if you really realised the horrors of what was going on you had a nervous breakdown.

"When I read my flying logbook now I can't believe it's the same person. Somebody being shot down who was a great friend of mine and who I shared a tent with for two years, and all I say is: 'Bad luck.'"

It was only once he left active duty that Adam finally put his architectural training to use on films, cutting his teeth on designs for *Around The World In 80 Days* and *The Trials Of Oscar Wilde*; but it was *Dr No* that really set his imagination loose.

"I got more kick out of doing something futuristic," he says, growing animated. "Film-making can be very tedious, you know"

Adam worked on the half dozen entries, which followed *Dr No*, including *Goldfinger*; *Diamonds Are Forever* and *Moonraker* His influence extended to the gadgets and vehicles - with his love of fast cars, he even selected the famous *Aston Martin*.

"The Bonds became bigger and bigger with more spectacle and more gadgets and more this and more that," he recalls with an arc of ash. "I started spending a lot of money You had to cover yourself by calling in structural engineers, who were sometimes flummoxed by crazy ideas."

Although in his sets Adam aimed to "create his own type of reality", they were more convincing than he imagined:

outraged cinema-goers who thought *Goldfinger's* Fort Knox set was the real thing wrote to protest about security implications; others asked for the name of the country house

where they thought *Sleuth* had been shot. But it was the cockpit of the atomic bomber in *Strangelove* that worried the military of the day

"We didn't get any co-operation' from the Americans at that time Adam recalls. "The B-52 was still on the classified list. One day some American Air Force personnel visited the set and saw the cockpit, with the secret failsafe device we designed. They went white. The next day I had a memo from Stanley: 'I hope you can justify all your research. We might be investigated.'"

Adam found that Kubrick lived up to his difficult reputation, and turned down work on 2001:

*A Space Odyssey* when the pair reunited in the mid-

Seventies for the costume drama *Barry Lyndon*, for which Adam won an Oscar; the stress of working with the director (among other things) made him seriously ill. "Ja, he was very difficult. *Barry Lyndon* was a painful experience, but we remained friends all his life."

He has always been most comfortable creating newer, more exciting worlds, so he was a natural choice to design the Berlin Millennium Exhibition.

"I decided to come up with five impressive elements, almost like a film set," he explains, "so that when the public first sees this hall they are impressed by these major structures." Impressing the public with major structures? Adam knows how to play to his strengths.

