

Reviews

The Pervert's Guide to Cinema

★★★★★

Dir Sophie Fiennes GB/ Austria/
Netherlands (n/c) 150 mins, ICA

Looking back now, it's not hard to believe that the Iron Curtain finally collapsed because it could no longer contain the irrepressible force that is Slovenian psychoanalytic philosopher Slavoj Žižek. One of contemporary thought's most distinctively maverick public intellectuals, the ultra-prolific Žižek has authored dozens of books and hundreds of articles, marrying Lacan to Hegel in his pop-culturally informed quest to reveal our deeply hidden motivations.

Cinema has long been a tool aiding his theories – his 'celebrity' persona has been the subject of a couple of documentaries

already – but here, taking dozens of classic scenes from Hitchcock, Lynch, Tarkovsky and more, he is truly in his element, improvising around the nature of reality and appearance, the unconscious need for belief and control, the role of fantasy and much else. His vivid close readings are given an extra twist in a striking visual leap. Fiennes has immersed Žižek directly in the scenes he discusses, either shooting him in key locations from the likes of 'The Birds' or constructing numerous replica sets, so that he can lurk and riff from the basement of Norman Bates' house in 'Psycho'.

It's a bold, invigorating move, and for Sophie Fiennes, much of whose previous documentary work has also investigated ideas of language and performance ('Hoover Street Revival') as well as exploring form (with dancer Michael Clark), this three-part work is a natural development, moving further into an understanding of the moving image. For Žižek, it's a visually exuberant showcase of his infectious enthusiasm around the workings of both the mind and medium. The shared result is essential viewing, for cinephiles of course, but also for anyone interested in the enduring power of cinema to shape our desires and fuel our dreams. *Gareth Evans*



Zizek takes on 'The Exorcist'