

Following the lead of a *Pervert*

BY JON DAVIES

Sophie Fiennes's epic three-part voyage through cinema – led by the virtuoso Slovenian philosopher-trickster Slavoj Žižek – ends with Žižek's impassioned response to the sentimental wallop delivered by the closing scene of Charlie Chaplin's *City Lights*. After the once-blind girl gazes into the tramp's eyes and realizes he is in fact the wealthy benefactor who has restored her sight, "We don't know what will happen," Žižek says. "We have the words 'The End' and the black screen. But the singing goes on, as if the emotion is now too strong – it spills over the very frame."

He continues, "In order to understand today's world, we need cinema; *literally*, it's only in cinema that we get that crucial dimension which we are not yet ready to confront in our reality. If you are looking for what is, in reality, more real than reality itself, look into cinematic fiction." How can any self-respecting cinephile argue with such a zealous assertion of the power and value of the moving image?



The Pervert's Guide to Cinema

An insightful, indispensable and eye-opening love letter to the movies, *The Pervert's Guide to Cinema* is also an expedition into the furthest reaches of Žižek's Lacanian/Marxist theories, last on display at last year's Festival in Astra Taylor's wondrous doc *Žižek!* What makes the film so much more than a grad-school lecture is Žižek's glorious wit and sense

of play, which sees the shaggy, lisp-ing *penseur maudit* delivering his analyses while occupying the sets of his favourite films.

And so we find Žižek in the cellar with Mother in *Psycho* and crouching on the floor of the disturbing bathroom inspection scene in *The Conversation*. It is hard to adequately describe the acute joy

of seeing Žižek attempting to steer a boat through Bodega Bay as Tippi Hedren did in Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds*, losing control due to his giddy joking that he is Melanie rushing to screw Mitch.

Other than Hitchcock and Chaplin, Žižek's personal pantheon includes many of the canonical works of David Lynch, Andrei Tarkovsky and Stanley Kubrick but also rarely discussed novelties including the Stalinist musical *Kubanskie kazaki* and Clarence Brown's *Possessed*, with its heroine watching the scenes aboard a passing train as if they were projected on a movie screen – all her desires writ large.

In a discussion of *The Matrix*, Žižek goes so far as to claim that if you take away all the fictions that structure and regulate our reality, there would be nothing left – our so-called false consciousness is not a mask but rather our material being. Pure genius.

THE PERVERT'S GUIDE TO CINEMA

Sept. 7, 5:00pm, ROM

Sept. 9, 12:15pm, Cumberland 3

Sept. 14, 8:30pm, Varsity 7