

# THE PERVERT'S GUIDE TO CINEMA

(DOCU — U.K.-AUSTRIA-NETHERLANDS)

A P Guide presentation of a Lone Star (U.K.)/Mischief Films (Austria)/Amoeba Films (Netherlands) production, in association with Kasander Film. (International sales: Lone Star, London.) Produced by Martin Rosenbaum, Georg Misch, Ralph Wieser, Sophie Fiennes. Executive producers, Jan Younghusband, Reinhard Wulf. Co-producer, Kees Kasander.

Directed, written by Sophie Fiennes. Camera (color, DigiBeta), Remko Schnorr; editor, Ethel Shepherd; music, Brian Eno; production designer, Ben Zuydwijk; costume designer, Hedi Legerstee; sound, Ab Grooters; assistant director, Natascha Tenissen. Reviewed at Toronto Film Festival (Another View), Sept. 8, 2006. (Also in Rotterdam, Sydney, Karlovy Vary, Brisbane, Melbourne film festivals.) Running time: 150 MIN. With: Slavoj Zizek.

By EDDIE COCKRELL

**A** virtuoso marriage of image and thought, "The Pervert's Guide to Cinema" is a propulsive, stream-of-consciousness sprint through the movie-projector mind of Slovenian philosopher and psychoanalyst Slavoj Zizek, who uses clean and properly framed clips from some 43 mostly high-profile films to illustrate his ideas on sexuality, subjectivity and that old standby, fantasy vs. reality. One-of-a-kind pic has already been embraced by the fest circuit, and though it could stand by itself theatrically, its true calling is on the shelf of anyone claiming to be a serious cinephile.

The exhilarating twist here, pulled off with wit and assurance by director Sophie Fiennes, sister of Ralph and Joseph, working here with an ace tech staff, was to construct sets in Holland matching some of the clips used to illustrate Zizek's broad-ranging monologues.

Thus, Zizek appears to slump in Neo's leather chair as the conflicted hacker decides which pill to take in "The Matrix," sits expectantly in the stark black-and-white Bates basement in Alfred Hitchcock's "Psycho" and even perches on a corner of Dorothy's couch in David Lynch's "Blue Velvet."

These clever lecture scenes are supplemented by key authentic locations: in a rowboat watching Bodega Bay explode in Hitchcock's "The Birds"; tiptoeing in and around rooms 771 and 773 of the former Jack Tar Hotel in San Francisco deconstructing the toilet

in Francis Ford Coppola's "The Conversation"; and watering an Illinois garden nominally matching "Blue Velvet's" bucolic suburbia.

Cumulative effect is vertiginous, leaving no time for visual lulls during Zizek's complex yet riveting monologues. "Cinema is the ultimate pervert art," he enthuses, with typical brio. "It doesn't give you what you desire, it tells you how to desire."

Thus, auds learn over pic's three parts that: "explosive outputs of maternal ego" prompt "The Birds" to attack; Freud's division of the psyche can be explained via the Marx Brothers and the Bates house; the moral of Vertigo is "the only good woman is a dead woman"; the Zone in Andrei Tarkovsky's "Stalker" represents the whiteness of the theater screen; and so on.

Lynch's oeuvre fares the best overall, with Hitchcock and Tarkovsky coming in a close second. As with work of all these helmers, multiple "Guide" viewings are needed to take it all in.

Though his ideas are fascinating and his enthusiasm is infectious, nobody's going to mistake Zizek for a conventional presenter. A genial bear of a man with unkempt hair and beard, who sweats and waves as he speaks, he's allowed false starts and sudden silences by

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Fiennes, which add to the sheer energy of his presentation.

Tech wizardry repped a challenge met spectacularly by all. Ben Zuydwijk's production design is jarringly accurate, while whoever was in charge of making sure clips were of good quality and in the proper aspect ratio did a superlative job.

Pic was first commissioned by Blighty's Art Shock Channel 4 and WDR in Germany. Parts two and three were edited on spec, with six extra minutes added to current feature running time. A handful of ambient Brian Eno pieces are appropriately spooky. Invoking Hitchcock's famed plot gimmick of something prominent with little or no ultimate meaning, Fiennes explains the title as "something of a McGuffin, just a way to get you into this network."



Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Zizek navigates Bodega Bay as he deconstructs Hitchcock's "The Birds" in "Pervert's Guide to Cinema."