

KINO
INTERNATIONAL

PRESENTS



DOUBLE TAKE

A film by Johan Grimonprez

Winner, Black Pearl Award

Middle East International Film Festival - Abu Dhabi

Official Selection

Berlin International Film Festival

Sundance Film Festival

London Film Festival

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SYNOPSIS

Johan Grimonprez's ingenious documentary/fiction hybrid — a meditation on identity, filmmaking, power and paranoia — looks at Alfred Hitchcock's late 50s and early 60s films against the climate of Cold War-era political anxiety. Using a meticulous array of archive footage – as well as a story by novelist Tom McCarthy (*Remainder*) about Hitchcock encountering his double during production of *The Birds* – Grimonprez traces the global rise of fear as a commodity, examining modern history through the lens of mass media, advertising and Hollywood.

CREDITS / TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Hitchcock Double: Ron Burrage

Hitchcock Voice: Mark Perry

Written & Directed by Johan Grimonprez

Story by Tom McCarthy; inspired by "25 August, 1983" by Jorge Luis Borges

Produced by Emmy Oost

Co-Produced by Hanneke van der Tas, Nicole Gerhards & Denis Vaslin

Edited by Dieter Diependaele & Tyler Hubby

Music by Christian Halten

Produced by Zap-o-Matik

Co-Produced by Nikovantastic Film & Volya Films

Produced with the support of the Flanders Audiovisual Fund, Nederlands Fonds voor de Film, nordmedia Fonds GmbH in Lower Saxony and Bremen, Rotterdam Film Fund, ZDF/arte, Beeldende Kunst Strombeek-Mechelen and the Hammer Museum

Double Take is a further development of the film *Looking for Alfred*, originally co-commissioned by Film and Video Umbrella and Zapomatik

Belgium/Germany/The Netherlands

Running time: 80 minutes

Aspect ratio: 1.78 : 1



ABOUT THE FILMMAKER

Johan Grimonprez was born in Roeselare, Belgium in 1962. He studied at the School of Visual Arts and attended the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program in New York.

As a child of the first TV generation, Grimonprez mixes reality and fiction and presents history as a multi-perspective dimension open to manipulation. He first achieved international acclaim with his film essay *dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y*, which premiered at the Centre Pompidou and Documenta X in Kassel in 1997, and eerily foreshadowed the events of September 11th. Consisting of recycled images taken from news broadcasts, Hollywood movies, animated films and commercials, the film looks at airplane hijackings since the 1970s and how news reporting has changed in that period of time.

Grimonprez's *Looking for Alfred* (2005) – the basis for *Double Take* – plays with the theme of the double through simulations and reversals. The point of departure is the film director Alfred Hitchcock and his legendary guest appearances in his own films: innumerable Hitchcock doppelgangers act out a mysterious game of confusion in which Hitchcock meets Hitchcock. This puzzling game of confusion also pays tribute to the pictorial cosmos of the Surrealist painter René Magritte. *Looking for Alfred* won the International Media Award (ZKM, Germany) in 2005 as well as the European Media Award in 2006.

Grimonprez's productions have traveled the main festival circuit, playing in Telluride, Los Angeles, Rio de Janeiro, Tokyo and Berlin. His curatorial projects have been hosted at major exhibitions and museums worldwide such as the Whitney Museum in New York, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich and the Tate Modern in London. Grimonprez's work is included in numerous collections such as the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, the Kanazawa Art Museum, Japan, the National Gallery, Berlin and the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Denmark.

Grimonprez is currently a faculty member at the School of Visual Arts (New York). He lives and works in Brussels and New York. (*adapted from text provided by the Sean Kelly Gallery*)



GEOFFREY MACNAB ON *DOUBLE TAKE* AND GRIMONPREZ FOR FLANDERS IMAGE

THE HITCHCOCK EFFECT

In his new film *Double Take*, artist and filmmaker Johan Grimonprez explores familiar themes: the way television manipulates audiences; induces a sense of fear; blurs the lines between fiction and reality. Again, at the centre of the film is that looming, jowly presence, Alfred Hitchcock. In a sense, the film is a companion piece to Grimonprez's short *Looking For Alfred*, which likewise played with the theme of the double by looking at Hitchcock's cameo appearances in his own films and envisaging what might happen if Hitchcock were to meet... Hitchcock. The difference about the new project is that the stakes have been raised.

Flashback to the early 1960s. It's the time of the Cuban missile crisis but also an era where the rivalry between film and television is fierce. Cinemas are closing down as the tube steals their audiences. Hollywood is in the process of redefining itself. Hitchcock has already made *Psycho* with his TV crew. He is about to start work on *The Birds*. At the same time, he is creating a new image for himself as TV personality — the man behind *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*. The Cold War is intensifying. American audiences have watched Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev and US Vice-President Richard Nixon during their bizarre 'kitchen debate' on TV — an encounter that plays today like a parody of an interview on the Steve Allen or Milton Berle show. The two men are clowning. In a sense, they are doubles of one another too. Despite their folksy chit-chat, the threat is palpable. They are representatives of two global powers who are ready to threaten one another with destruction.

GOOSEBUMPS

Double Take opens with accounts of an uncanny incident in the autumn of 1948 when hundreds of birds crashed into the Empire State Building and plummeted to the street. Next, we hear about a plane crashing into the Empire State. Hitchcock's film of *The Birds* was not, perhaps, as far fetched as it seemed. The fear felt about such freak incidences was to become more and more commonplace. Grimonprez contends that the sense of looming unease felt in the early 1960s is still with us today. "*The Birds* is a metaphor for catastrophe television invading the home," Grimonprez muses. "Against that, there is the historical backdrop of the missile crisis and the Cold War. That is a metaphor for doubles — the doubles of east and west, the political doubles of one another, both projecting fear but trapped in the same paradigm...it relates to something very contemporary — the whole business of terrorist spectacle, the war in Iraq and nuclear proliferation with Iran. They are things in the background always shimmering."

Hitchcock tapped into the sense of dread that was in the society around him and used it to induce 'goosebumps' in his audience. Reduced to its essence, Grimonprez suggests that this dread was all about fear of "the other." The media continues to accentuate and prey this fear. In his film, there is a fictional element too. He has recruited a Hitchcock lookalike, Ron Burrage, famous for impersonating Hitchcock. At times, watching the film, we're not sure where the archive footage ends or the imagery of Burrage begins.



HIJACKING DOCUMENTARY

Double Take also stands as a description of Grimonprez's working method – which is to question received images and to turn clichés on their head. Meanwhile, the phrase also hints at what viewers have to do to make sense of the huge amount of images they are bombarded with on a daily basis.

Grimonprez first made his name internationally with his 1997 film *dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y*, a hijacking documentary that many now feel to have been prophetic. The film was examining the voyeuristic fascination that terrorist hijackings exercised on viewers and the ingenious methods — sometimes closed to those used by avant-garde filmmakers — with which the news media filmed and presented their activities. The German composer Karlheinz Stockhausen famously described the events of 9/11 as “the biggest work of art there has ever been.” His remarks provoked huge controversy and were taken out of context. Nonetheless, what Stockhausen called the “cosmic spirit of rebellion, of anarchy” was precisely what Grimonprez had been exploring in his documentary. He was looking at the way — as novelist Don DeLillo put it — the terrorist had usurped the role of the artist. “What terrorists gain, novelists lose,” DeLillo wrote.

What were Grimonprez's own feelings during 9/11? “For me, the events were a confirmation of what was set forth in *dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y*,” the director states. He remembers that at the time of the terrorist attacks, he was breaking up with his then girlfriend. For him, the two events became intertwined. He wasn't able to separate one incident from the other. Somehow, the personal and the political meshed.

Geoffrey MacNab is a journalist at The Guardian and The Independent