

MOVIE REVIEW; An Anything-but-Regular Look at a 'Guy' From L.A.

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Document Text

"Guy" is a creepy, funny and altogether provocative meditation on the power of a film camera--and it's also almost a love story. In the title role, Vincent D'Onofrio plays a handsome, well-built 34-year-old single L.A. male. Surely, this description has something to do with an unseen female filmmaker in selecting him as the subject upon which she will turn her camera during all their working hours. "When it's over, we'll know," she tells him.

Whether by accident or design, the never-identified filmmaker (Hope Davis) has hit upon an archetype in Guy, whose very name is generic. Like lots of men you see all over the city, Guy is well-dressed and drives a luxury car (a black Mercedes-Benz in his case) but is not as affluent as his lifestyle would suggest.

He clearly lives by his wits, for he's currently being paid to locate classic American cars for resale in Scandinavia, which doesn't look to be a lifetime career. What's more, the impressive Hollywood Hills home in which he's living actually belongs to his employers. There's a temporary quality to his life that's very L.A.--a quality that, combined with the fact that he's intelligent and decent, makes him vulnerable to the filmmaker.

Not surprisingly, Guy is initially outraged at having this unknown woman with a camera coming out of nowhere and latching on to him like a barnacle. Before you can start wondering seriously as to why he doesn't get a restraining order against her here and now, her amazing cool and quiet persistence start undermining his protests.

*

He begins to like the attention, he acknowledges that he's used to not letting anyone get too close to him (a typical male attitude) and at last he admits that the surveillance has started giving him a sense of security. He perhaps senses that a film about him would somehow give meaning to a life that maybe doesn't have much meaning when he comes to think about it. In any event, he gets addicted to the constant attention, even if it at times exasperates him. Worse yet, he finds himself falling in love with the woman we can't see.

Writer Kirby Dick and director Michael Lindsay-Hogg suggest chillingly how a camera, if it holds its focus on an individual with relentless impassiveness, may inevitably progress from recording reality to transforming it in a profoundly destructive manner. (They also remind us of the movies' potent voyeuristic appeal.) Filmed entirely on location all over L.A., "Guy" may be modest in budget but ambitious intellectually and aesthetically. That it succeeds is because of the filmmakers' ability to sustain a story entirely from the unseen filmmaker's point of view and from D'Onofrio's ability to hold the screen so effectively, revealing more and more of what makes the very likable but increasingly defenseless Guy tick.

D'Onofrio, one of the movies' most versatile and venturesome young actors, also signed on as a co-producer of this most distinctive and disturbing film.

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* MPAA rating: R for a strong sex scene, and for language including some sexual dialogue. Times guidelines: It includes strong language and sexuality.

(BEGIN TEXT OF INFOBOX / INFOGRAPHIC)

'Guy'

Vincent D'Onofrio: Guy

Hope Davis: Camera

Kimber Riddle: Veronica

Diane Salinger: Gail

Richard Portnow: Al

A Gramercy Pictures release of a PolyGram Filmed Entertainment presentation in association with Pandora Films (Frankfurt) with the support of Filmstiftung Nordrhein-Westfalen of a Renee Missel-Tulchin/Ades production. Director Michael Lindsay-Hogg. Screenplay Kirby Dick. Producer Renee Missel. Associate producer Warren Jason. Executive producers Harris Tulchin, Richard Ades. Screenplay Kirby Dick. Cinematographer Arturo Smith. Editor Dody Dorn. Production designer Kara Lindstrom. Running time: 1 hour, 34 minutes.

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* Exclusively at the Westside Pavilion, 10800 W. Pico Blvd., West Los Angeles, (310) 475-0202.

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Posted: Mon., Sep. 23, 1996

Guy

A Mikado release (in Italy). Produced by Renee Missel for Polygram Filmed Entertainment in association with Pandora Film (Frankfurt), Nordrhein-Westfalen Film Fund. (International sales: Polygram Film Intl.) Executive producers, Harris Tulchin, Richard Ades. Co-producer, Vincent D'Onofrio. Directed by Michael Lindsay-Hogg. Screenplay, Kirby Dick.

Guy - Vincent D'Onofrio
Camera - Hope Davis
Veronica - Kimber Riddle

By [DEBORAH YOUNG](#)

Alternately disturbing, funny and thought-provoking, "Guy" is that oddity, an experimental film that has something to say to general audiences. Eclectic filmmaker Michael Lindsay-Hogg, whose work ranges from "Let It Be" to "Frankie Starlight," explores the disrupted life of a young man relentlessly pursued by a woman with a video camera. A very small but likable film, this Polygram production has the offbeat appeal to muscle its way beyond arthouse venues with careful handling.

The story is shot entirely from the viewpoint of one character, a nameless documentary filmmaker, and what she sees through her camera lens. This means we almost never get a glimpse of Hope Davis, the actress who plays the role, beyond her shapely white hands and crimson nail polish, which occasionally come into camera range. Dominating the screen are the face and body parts of Guy (Vincent D'Onofrio), a stranger she casually chooses on the street to be the subject of the film she's making.

Amusingly, she doesn't ask Guy's permission to star in her "project." At first irritated, then angry, Guy tries to shake off his unwanted biographer, to no avail. Her blind determination to keep taping "until the film is finished" overrules all his objections. Gradually Guy lets himself be seduced by her insistence that his life is important. As his diffidence turns to complicity, he becomes more and more intimate with the camera, even letting himself be filmed in the bathroom and, finally, in an especially perverse moment of exhibitionism/voyeurism, in the bedroom making love to his girlfriend.

Perhaps inevitably, he develops a fatal attraction to the woman behind the camera. Lindsay-Hogg and screenwriter Kirby Dick use this bizarre situation to disintegrate the facade of success Guy has constructed around himself. To let the woman go on filming him, he loses his job, his car, his apartment and his girlfriend. At the same time, the filmmaker's own fragility and her fear of emotional involvement become increasingly apparent.

Both leads cope with difficult roles D'Onofrio because he always has to act to the camera, Davis because she never appears onscreen. D'Onofrio is excellent as an average guy whose toughness slowly melts into embarrassing vulnerability. Hidden behind the camera and forced to act with her voice alone, Davis comes across as a serious filmmaker admirably determined to complete her self-designed project, but also as someone who uses the camera neurotically to defend herself from personal involvement.

Fine on-target tech work belies pic's shoestring cost. Art director Kara Lindstrom creates expressively empty corners on ordinary L.A. streets that mirror Guy's alienation. Cinematographer Arturo Smith gives the visuals a smooth contemporary look, while playing with cut-off framing to suggest they are the work of a woman using a hand-held camera. With the same philosophy, editor Dody Dorn skillfully shifts the film from one register to another, using a freewheeling style full of jump cuts and cinema verite techniques to make us temporarily believe this is the woman filmmaker's own cut.

With: Diane Salinger, Richard Portnow, Valente Rodrigues.

Camera, Arturo Smith; editor, Dody Dorn; music, Jeff Beal; art direction, Kara Lindstrom; costumes, Marissa Borsetto, Amanda Pelisek; associate producer, Warren Jason; line producer, John Michaels. Reviewed at Venice Film Festival (Window on Images), Sept. 1, 1996. Running time: 89 MIN.

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FILM COMMENT

November/December Issue 1996

THE 53rd VENICE FILM FESTIVAL
by Harlan Kennedy

Guy is intriguing. Point-of-view movies almost never work (see *Lady in the Lake*, alias *Lady in Your Face*), yet this one does. For ninety minutes Vincent D'Onofrio is tracked by the camera of an unseen voyeuse-heroine – that is, he sees her, we don't – who gets her kicks from video-hijacking the lives of strangers. She wears him down into doing everything for the lens, and we mean everything, while they sort of weirdly fall in love.

Made riveting by the reactive richness of D'Onofrio's performance (he also co-produced), Guy takes the audience's prurience and turns it like a mirror to their own faces. More than a movie, it's a deconstruction of moviegoing. Britain's Lindsay-Hogg has never directed anything this mesmeric before, which inclines one to dole out equal credit to writer Kirby Dick and double-strike deus praesens D'Onofrio. Has this man been bitten by creative adventure after playing Orson Welles in *Ed Wood*?

Movie Reviews



Guy

by *Greg Lee*

posted August 1, 2008 10:00 AM

Vincent D'Onofrio's talent as a character actor is indisputable. With last year's "The Whole Wide World," D'Onofrio showed he had a knack for producing as well, even as he carried a lead role; "Guy" is no different.

The indie mainstay has again chosen an excellent script by a newcomer, and as a producer has brought in director Michael Lindsay-Hogg to shoot a disturbingly unconventional tale of love and separation. D'Onofrio plays the titular archetypal fellow who finds himself under the unrelenting gaze of a woman and her camera. The nameless, faceless woman ("The Myth of Fingerprints" Hope Davis) spies Guy in downtown Los Angeles and begins making a documentary about his life--without ever asking permission. Naturally, Guy is taken aback by this intrusion into his life. He responds sequentially with bewilderment, anger, resignation and ardor. D'Onofrio portrays Guy's range of emotions--and his general manner--with such surprising realism it's easy to forget about the movie projector's buzz.

The woman's camera is the only perspective the audience sees, becoming instigator and victim to the material and social degradation Guy endures over the course of the film. The woman demands her own anonymity yet pleads for complete, intimate access to every aspect of Guy's life. She clearly gets more than a documentarian's satisfaction out of her relationship with Guy. She panics every time he tries to leave; the filming will end only when she says it's over.

"Guy" was written by Kirby Dick, whose controversial documentary "Sick: The Life and Death of Bob Flanagan, Supermasochist" received a Special Recognition award at Sundance this year for its unflinching look at indisputedly painful subject matter. His teaming with Lindsay-Hogg--whose first film, the Beatles documentary "Let It Be," became a prototype of the genre--has crafted a startling look at our spectator society, wrought by expert watchers. Starring Vincent D'Onofrio, Hope Davis and Kimber Riddle. Directed by Michael Lindsay-Hogg. Written by Kirby Dick. Produced by Vincent D'Onofrio and Renee Missel. A Polygram release. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 89 min.