



<http://www.screendaily.com/ScreenDailyArticle.aspx?intStoryID=43261>

## Double Take

Jonathan Romney in Berlin

11 Feb 2009 13:59

*Dir: Johan Grimoprez. Belgium-Germany-Netherlands. 2008. 80mins.*

**Double Take**, is an ingenious hybrid – part mock-documentary, part conceptual provocation –from Belgian film-maker Johan Grimoprez, the sort of film that viewers will simply have to see for themselves to get a sense of what it is. Chances are that when they do, they'll relish every minute of it. A brilliantly-assembled montage film along the lines of 1982 cult hit *The Atomic Café*, *Double Take* will appeal to Hitchcock fans in particular, and more generally to anyone whose sense of humour runs to the conceptual. Festival and TV exposure look like dead certs, but carefully handled, *Double Take* could achieve niche theatrical success.

Largely composed of a zippy assemblage of diverse TV and newsreel material, plus odd clips from Hitchcock features, the film muses on Hitchcock's persona and sense of humour, and implicitly reads his films of the late 50s and early 60s against the climate of Bomb-era political anxiety on which, arguably, they thrived. The film, an expansion of Grimoprez's 2005 project *Looking For Alfred*, especially dwells upon Hitchcock's preoccupation with doubles. The theme recurs with surprising, even obsessive regularity in the portly auteur's jokey intros to vintage TV series *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*.

Grimoprez's co-writer, UK novelist Tom McCarthy, further expands on the theme in an apocryphal story – inspired by Borges and narrated in voice-over by Hitch soundalike Mark Perry – about the maestro meeting his own future self on the set of *The Birds*.

Interwoven with this dense assemblage of Hitchcockiana is a mass of historical newsreel material, dealing largely with US-USSR relations from the late 50s on, and focusing on America's relationship with that other famous Hitchcock lookalike Nikita Krushchev, first seen memorably cheeking Richard Nixon during the so-called 'Kitchen Summit' of 1959.

Other material touches on Cuba, the Space Race, the spread of TV in America, and an archive collection of very droll coffee commercials, the import of which becomes apparent at the end of the Hitchcock doppelganger story. A further thread features Ron Burrage, an affable real-life double of the great man (he played the maestro in Robert Lepage's 1995 film *The Confessional*), musing on life as a Hitchalike.

This is very much a political film from Grimoprez, best known for 1998's

*Dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y*, a Don de Lillo-inspired study of plane hijacking. The witty, virtuoso collation of materials offered in *Double Take* leaves viewers to draw their own conclusions about the film's ideas on identity, film-making, power and paranoia, but the film's love of Hitchcock – the artist, the public persona, the TV clown – is evident and infectious.

Production companies

Zap-o-matik

Nikovantastic Film

Volya Films  
Flanders Audiovisual Fund (VAF)  
ZFF/ARTE  
Nordmedia  
NFF  
Rotterdam Film Fund

International sales  
Zap-o-Matik  
(32) 2 219 00 18

Producer  
Emmy Oost

Screenplay  
Johan Grimonprez  
Tom McCarthy

Editors  
Dieter Diependaele  
Tyler Hubby

Screen International is the premier source of information on the global film business. To subscribe visit:  
[www.subscription.co.uk/screen/seav](http://www.subscription.co.uk/screen/seav)

Copyright Emap Media 2007. Emap Ltd. Registered Office: Greater London House, Hampstead Road, London NW1 7EJ. Registered in England and Wales, no. 435820 All rights reserved.