

European 60s

Peeping Tom 1960

Friday, May 16 - Monday, May 19, 2008



Film Information

Directed by

Michael Powell

Language

English

Running Time

101 minutes

Film Notes

There is no shortage of reasons for the extraordinary creepiness of British director Michael Powell's PEEPING TOM. Among the more obscure is its peculiar origin: written for the screen by Leo Marks, a former World War II cryptographer who later became a screenwriter and then even later served as the voice of Satan in Martin Scorsese's THE LAST TEMPTATION OF CHRIST. (So there's that). Marks had been thinking about a couple movie concepts—one about “scoptophilia” (the fancy word for peeping tom-ism) and another about a photographer who kills with his camera—when the notion struck him to combine the two.

The result of that unholy conceptual marriage was a mixed bag. Today, PEEPING TOM is as famous for its initial critical reaction as it is for the remarkable filmmaking that went into it. (One horrified reviewer, not content that the film simply be pulled from theaters, suggested the only proper recourse would be to “shovel it up and flush it down the nearest sewer”). Sadly, the overall response was so harsh that it all but ended

Powell's directorial career. “It truly ruined me,” he once said. “After it, it was impossible to get funds for other projects.”

That PEEPING TOM would eventually gain in reputation and develop an impassioned community of fans—chief among them Scorsese, who played an instrumental role in its restoration and re-release nearly twenty years after the film's disastrous unveiling—was a minor consolation to an understandably embittered Powell: “I make a film that nobody wants to see and then, thirty years later, everybody has either seen it or wants to see it.”

—Casey



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“Whatever I photograph I always lose.”

More Information

Screenplay by
Leo Marks

Featuring
Karlheinz Böhm
Maira Shearer
Anna Massey
Maxine Audley
Brenda Bruce
Michael Goodliffe

Cinematography by
Otto Heller

Original Music by
Brian Easdale

Film Editing by
Noreen Ackland

Country of Origin
UK

“I have always felt that PEEPING TOM and 8 1/2 say everything that can be said about filmmaking, about the process of dealing with film, the objectivity and subjectivity of it, and the confusion between the two. 8 1/2 captures the glamour and enjoyment of filmmaking, while PEEPING TOM shows the aggression of it, how the camera violates... From studying them you can discover everything about people who make films, or at least people who express themselves through films.”

—Martin Scorsese

Also Recommended

The Night of the Hunter 1955 (Dir. Laughton)
Psycho 1960 (Dir. Hitchcock)
A Clockwork Orange 1971 (Dir. Kubrick)
Don't Look Now 1973 (Dir. Roeg)
The Conversation 1974 (Dir. Coppola)