

Following (Christopher Nolan, 1998)

This movie is an intriguing film noir and suspense thriller at the same time. It is literally “noir” because it is shot entirely in black and white. It is also “black” in a deeper sense because despite the fact that by the end of the movie we shall know what’s behind most of the twists of the story, - but probably not all – but the real criminal never gets caught. The “innocent” has to suffer the consequences of his crimes. But we know that nobody is innocent here.

The film starts twice. First we see somebody putting on surgical gloves and packing around. Then we are watching someone telling a story. In the rest of the movie we learn from him what happened in one continuous flashback. Up until at the very end when we return to the same interview. However the scenes we see are not exactly chronological. A few of them are out time and space. This is a tool that the director inherited from Hitchcock and used very effectively to create suspense. I certainly didn’t anticipate the 2 or 3 main twists in the characters relations to each other for a long time. Having seen the whole movie these out of time sequences make sense, but during the movie they were intriguing. Particularly that only from the middle of the movie’s 70 minutes can we identify that the person whose mysterious scenes are intercut is the main character with a changed outlook.

The movie starts out as a documentary with voice-over narrative. Vast majority of it was shot with handheld camera. Its shaky movement gives us the feeling that we are watching something that we are not supposed to, we are voyeurs. This is also a major theme of the movie. The protagonist follows people to gain ideas for his writings, hence the title. When one of his victims faces him, they befriend each other and from then on he starts to follow this person who turns out to be a burglar. As such, he is not burglarizing other people’s places for valuables but also to interrupt their lives. And for voyeuristic reasons: he enjoys looking into the secrets of lives he is not supposed to know from the inside. His narrative on life and his philosophy on violating privacy also strengthen our feeling that we are still watching a documentary. I hope I don’t ruin your experience if I tell you that the burglar was also a follower and the aspiring writer was also followed.

This movie was the director’s, Christopher Nolan’s first feature film. As such it is a bit like a practicing ground for *Memento* (2000), which he became famous with two years later. To show you how low budget this was I would like to mention that the police officer is Nolan’s uncle. Furthermore the movie was shot over a year on weekend, when the crew had free time.

Although I don’t recall the titles but I have seen one similarly built movie and know of another one. The one I saw is a French movie where a TV crew is following murders and is shot like a documentary, so the viewers believe that these are real murders. Very professionally and realistically shot. The other one is the same idea and came within the last half year. It follows two Russians who end up committing crimes in the US and become famous as they tape their actions and show it on TV. *Following* is defiantly ranks close to the top of the genre.