



"GOOD EVENING..." HITCHCOCK ON HITCHCOCK

Making a film means, first of all, to tell a story. That story can be an improbable one, but it should never be banal. It must be dramatic and human. What is drama, after all, but life with the dull bits cut out.

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There is a distinct difference between "suspense" and "surprise," and yet many pictures continually confuse the two. I'll explain what I mean. We are now having a very innocent little chat. Let us suppose that there is a bomb underneath this table between us. Nothing happens, and then all of a sudden, "Boom!" There is an explosion. The public is surprised, but prior to this surprise, it has seen an absolutely ordinary scene, of no special consequence. Now, let us take a suspense situation. The bomb is underneath the table and the public knows it, probably because they have seen the

anarchist place it there. The public is aware that the bomb is going to explode at one o'clock and there is a clock in the décor. The public can see that it is a quarter to one. In these conditions this same innocuous conversation becomes fascinating because the public is participating in the scene. The audience is longing to warn the characters on the screen: "You shouldn't be talking about such trivial matters. There's a bomb beneath you and it's about to explode!" In the first case we have given the public fifteen seconds of surprise at the moment of the explosion. In the second case we have provided them with fifteen minutes of suspense.

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What it boils down to is that villains are not all black and heroes are not all white; there are grays everywhere.

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The Lodger was the first true "Hitchcock movie."

... It was the first time I exercised my style ... We opened with the head of a blonde girl who is screaming. I remember the way I photographed it. I took a sheet of glass, placed the girl's head on the glass and spread her hair around until it filled the frame. Then we lit the glass from behind so that one would be struck by her light hair. Then we cut to show an electric sign advertising a musical play, *Tonight, Golden Curls*, with the reflection flickering in the water. The girl has drowned ... The consternation of the crowd suggests that a murder has been committed ... The man murders only women. Always blondes.

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Sex on the screen should be suspenseful, I feel. If sex is too blatant or obvious, there's no suspense. You know why I favor sophisticated blondes in my films? We're after the drawing-room type, the real ladies, who become whores once they're in the bedroom. Poor Marilyn Monroe had sex written all over her face, and Brigitte Bardot isn't very subtle either ... I think the most interesting women, sexually, are the English women. I feel that the English women, the Swedes, the northern Germans, and Scandinavians are a great deal more exciting than the Latin, the Italian, and the French women. Sex should not be advertised ... Look at the opening of *Catch a Thief*. I deliberately photographed Grace Kelly ice-cold and I kept cutting to her profile, looking classical, beautiful, and very distant. And then, when Cary Grant accompanies her to the door of her hotel room, what does she do? She thrusts her lips right up to his mouth.

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A mother sometimes demonstrates her love for



Hitchcock and Janet Leigh *Psycho*



A young Hitchcock and Anny Ondra *Blackmail*

Kim Novak and Hitchcock *Vertigo*



her baby by playing a game that consists of frightening the infant with gestures and sounds like “Boo, brr ...” The baby may be scared, but it will laugh and wave, and as soon as it can talk, it will call for more ... If *Psycho* had been intended as a serious picture, it would have been shown as a clinical case with no mystery or suspense... In the mystery and suspense genre, a tongue-in-cheek approach is indispensable.

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[On *Vertigo*:] I was intrigued by the hero’s attempts to re-create the image of a dead woman through

another one who’s alive ... The story is divided into two parts. The first part goes up to Madeleine’s death, when she falls from the steeple, and the second part opens with the hero’s meeting with Judy, a brunette who looks just like Madeline ... At first [James] Stewart thinks Judy may be Madeleine; then he resigns himself to the fact that she isn’t, on condition that Judy will agree to resemble Madeleine in every respect ... Cinematically, all of Stewart’s efforts to re-create the dead woman are shown in such a way that he seems to be trying to undress her, instead of the other way around. What I liked best is when the girl came back after having had her hair dyed blond. James Stewart is disappointed because she hasn’t put her hair up in a bun. What this really means is that the girl has almost stripped, but she still won’t take her knickers off ...

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I’m full of fears and I do my best to avoid difficulties and any kind of complications. I like everything around me to be clear as crystal and completely calm. I don’t want clouds overhead. I get a feeling of inner peace from a well-organized desk. When I take a bath, I put everything neatly back in place. You wouldn’t even know I’d been in the bathroom. My passion for orderliness goes hand in hand with a strong revulsion toward complications.

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There’s a devil in every one of us.

AN HISTORICAL FOOTNOTE

One of the principal characters in *Hitchcock Blonde* is identified as the body double who stood in for Janet Leigh during the filming of the shower scene, to spare Leigh from having to appear naked on the set. Terry Johnson chooses to render this character nameless and archetypal by calling her simply “The Blonde.” But in fact the identity of the real body double used during the filming of the shower scene has not been lost to us: she was Marli Renfro, a 23-year-old, red-headed nude model hired by Hitchcock for a total fee of \$500. According to Janet Leigh, despite the extensive shooting of the naked Renfro over the course of nearly a week, Hitchcock ended up using only shots of Leigh herself in the final cut. “That was all me,” said Leigh, “except for when Norman wraps the body in the shower curtain.” If Leigh’s recollection is accurate, then Marli Renfro’s immortality consists of playing a corpse wrapped in plastic. Body double indeed.

– John Glore