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## MODERN TIMES



## TIFF13: The Double

Posted by Sean Fitzpatrick | September 12, 2013 | 0 Comment | 1464 views

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The person that we see in the mirror is always more confident, attractive, and capable than the one that we present to the world. That mirrored self-image contains everything that we love and hate about our bodies and personalities. Yet, those reflected people seem to avoid the emotional and psychological scars that we carry around with us every day. Sometimes we're comforted by that feeling of simultaneous recognition and alienation that occurs when we see our reflections, and at other times it's frighteningly disconcerting. I mean, what if that reflection came into the world as another human being, presenting itself as a better you? This is the fundamental, disturbing question behind Richard Ayoade's new film, *The Double*.

*The Double* follows Simon (Jesse Eisenberg), a demure young man living and working in an industrial wasteland that looks like a cross between *Eraserhead's* Philadelphia and the interior of the *Nostromo*. Simon works a floor away from his dream girl, Hannah (Mia Wasikowska), but prefers to see her through a telescope when she's in her apartment. He's not a stalker – he just doesn't feel real enough to interact with the world on a meaningful level.

Simon's Pinocchio-like feelings of unreal-ness gain support from his oblivious boss (Wallace Shawn), demented mother (Phyllis Somerville), and selfishly apathetic coworkers. Existential matters only get worse for Simon when James (also Eisenberg) rears his uncanny head at the protagonist's workplace. James is everything Simon is not: he's forceful, attractive, self-assured, and charismatic – but he's also Simon's sociopathic doppelganger. As the story progresses, the twinned men become inextricably linked and inexorably doomed.

Eisenberg, Wasikowska, and the whole cast of mysterious characters in *The Double* are incredible,

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adding layers of depth and humanity to a story that threatens to be swallowed up by its own darkness. The cinematography, lighting, and set design are also marvelous. The sets, taken directly from dystopian 1980s science fiction, are lit and captured in such claustrophobic expressionist detail that it wouldn't be surprising to see Munch's ghostly screamer pop out of the shadows.

*The Double* is billed as a comedy, but it's adapted from the eponymous 1846 novella by Russian proto-existentialist Fyodor Dostoyevsky. So, the film's a comedy in the same way *Brazil* or *A Clockwork Orange* can be considered comedies – while frequently hilarious, the pitch black humor straddles the razor thin line between laughing and crying.

I don't make the comparisons to Gilliam and Kubrick lightly. Like those two directors, Ayoade fearlessly carries the plot to its necessary conclusion without sacrificing the story's lacerating sense of humor or eerie visual palette for a more sentimental and romantic atmosphere. And also like Kubrick and Gilliam, he sends you to bed laughing only so you will wake up in the middle of night screaming.

Given the synopsis, you might think that you've seen Ayoade's film before. Sure, *Dead Ringers* and even *Youth in Revolt* contain similar ideas. Trust me: you haven't seen anything as heart-breakingly funny or terrifyingly beautiful as *The Double*.

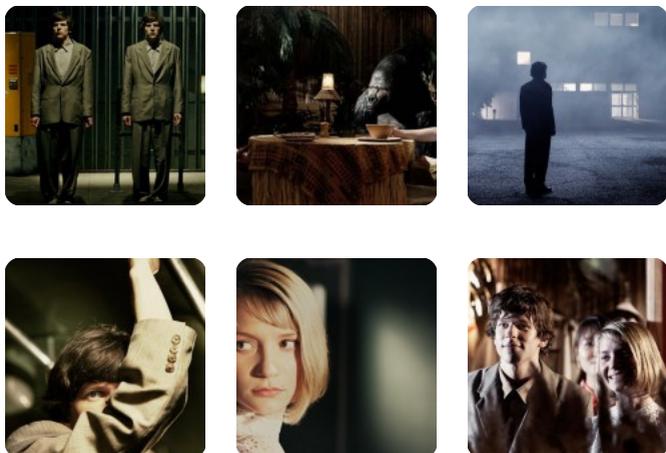
## Screening Times for The Double

Saturday September 7 Winter Garden Theatre 8:00 PM

Monday September 9 TIFF Bell Lightbox 1 2:30 PM

Sunday September 15 The Bloor Hot Docs Cinema 6:00 PM

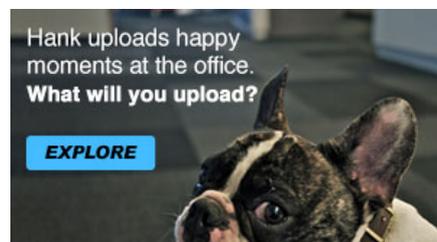
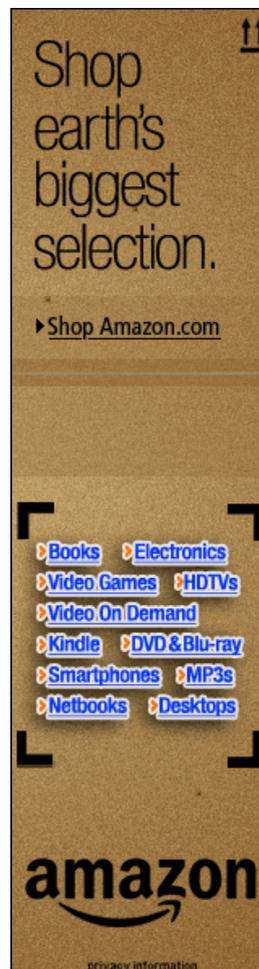
## A Gallery of Images from The Double



## Watch The Double Trailer



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FESTIVAL COVERAGE RICHARD AYOADE THE DOUBLE TIFF13

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### About Sean Fitzpatrick



Freelance film critic and avid fan of music, books, and movies. Learned the mercantile trade from my father and uncle, Niccolo and Maffeo, and met Kublai Khan.

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