

FOLLOWING



a film by Christopher Nolan



A ZEITGEIST FILMS RELEASE

FOLLOWING

a film by Christopher Nolan

Following is a wickedly clever story of how a young man's obsession with following people leads him into a dark underworld. Bill, the unlikely hero, is a marginalized but intriguing Everyman who follows strangers at random on the street. When Cobb, a man Bill has been following, catches him in the act, Bill is drawn into Cobb's world of breaking into flats and prying into the personal lives of their victims. In Cobb, Bill finds a strange companionship, part mentor, part confessor and part evil twin. With an ingenious structure that involves flashforwards and doubling back, the film tests and teases our knowledge and understanding just as it leads its hero into deeper and darker waters. This first feature heralds, in Christopher Nolan, a promising new talent to the indie film scene.

CHRISTOPHER NOLAN ON THE MAKING OF FOLLOWING

FOLLOWING was always planned as an ultra-low budget film, so the substance of the film was both inspired by and planned around the shooting style which we developed to accommodate our limited resources.

The script was written along the lines of what I see as the most interesting aspect of film noir and crime fiction; not baroque lighting setups and sinister villains, but simply that character is ultimately defined by action. In a compelling story of this genre we are continually being asked to rethink our assessment of the relationship between the various characters, and I decided to structure my story in such a way as to emphasize the audience's incomplete understanding of each new scene as it is first presented.

I saw the hand-held, black-and-white 16mm cinematography as a way of tapping into the cinematic feel of film noir, whilst giving it a different spin by shooting the scenes in a more modern documentary style. By operating the camera myself and by using minimal lighting, I was able to place the actors within each location in a relatively natural and interference-free environment. Extensive rehearsal in the months before shooting meant that on each shoot the actors were able to quickly and efficiently adapt the scene to the location we found ourselves in, and the hand-held, "newsreel" style camerawork let me be spontaneous in blocking out the scene, generally shooting just two long singles which were then intercut. I feel that this gave certain scenes an energy and spontaneity which would have been hard to achieve using more conventional production methods.

Even for a “no-budget” film our production methods were extreme. All of us were in full-time employment throughout the production, meaning that we were only able to shoot on Saturdays. As a result, it took us a year to get all the filming done, a blessing in disguise as it allowed me to pay for all the stock and processing from my salary without getting into debt. Knowing from the outset that our restrictive shooting “schedule” would require unusually dedicated actors, I asked Jeremy Theobald (for whom I had written the central role) to come on as a producer, and as such to help find the other actors we needed. Realizing that stage experience would be an asset in terms of getting through each scene first time (I needed a usable take every time we rolled the camera), Jerry looked back into his college drama society days and found Alex Haw and Lucy Russell, both of whom agreed to not cut their hair or leave the country unexpectedly for as long as it would take (I told them three months). We rehearsed two evenings a week for six months before shooting anything. The actors developed a familiarity with the material which meant that the finished film could be edited using almost exclusively first or second takes, and which allowed us to set up and shoot entire scenes in the two hours or so which we were sometimes given in our locations.

Locations were begged, borrowed, stolen... for the most part the film was shot in our own friends' flats. The main location was my parents' house, which worked perfectly - not only because the house is great, but also because the catering was excellent. The only hitch came when the house was burgled and ironically enough, some of the items which are stolen in one of our fictional burglaries, were stolen in real life. Thankfully we had most of what we needed although some of the inserts I had planned were now impossible to shoot.

BIOS

christopher nolan

producer/director/writer

Born in London in 1970, Christopher Nolan began making films at the age of seven using his father's super 8mm camera and an assortment of action man figures. He graduated to making films involving real people, and his super 8mm surreal short "Tarantella" was shown on PBS' *Image Union* in 1989. Chris studied English Literature at University College London while starting to make 16mm films at the college film society. His short film "Larceny" was shown at the Cambridge Film Festival in 1996, and his other 16mm shorts include a three-minute surreal film called "Doodlebug". **Following** is Chris' debut feature.

jeremy theobald

producer/actor

Jeremy Theobald has been involved with the theatre since his school days when he had a backstage role as lighting and sound operator. It wasn't until he was studying at university several years later that he started acting, playing roles in productions as diverse as *West Side Story* and Peter Schaffer's *Shrivings*. Jeremy's first film acting experience was as the lead in Christopher's short film "Larceny", and he went on to work with Chris on "Doodlebug". This led to their collaboration on the feature length **Following**, which Jerry produced and starred in. Jeremy has recently left a career in medical publishing to pursue acting full time.

emma thomas

producer

Emma Thomas got her first experience of producing low budget films at University College London's film society, and enjoyed it so much that she decided to abandon any plans she'd had to further pursue her field of Ancient History. After university, Emma went to work for Working Title Films, and carried on working there as in-house production co-ordinator throughout the year-long shoot of **Following**. Emma recently moved from London to Los Angeles.

lucy russell

actor

Following was Lucy Russell's first experience of film acting - her previous theatre credits include *The Man Who Came to Dinner* at the Bloomsbury Theatre in 1996 and *The Games People Play* at the Edinburgh Festival in 1995. After her graduation in French and Italian from University College London, Lucy took a summer course in acting at the Poor School in London. After just three days she was offered a place on the full time course which she now combines with a full time job—by day she is a personnel assistant at an Austrian bank in the City of London, by night a driven acting student.

alex haw

actor

Alex Haw was awarded a first by Bartlett School of Architecture in London, but while studying for his degree he also found time to act in more than ten plays for the University College London Drama Society, including Pinter's *Betrayal* and Peter Schaffer's *Shrivings*. Since playing Cobb in **Following**, Alex has spent time working for a firm of architects in Sydney, Australia, and is about to start his masters degree at Princeton for which he has been awarded a Fulbright scholarship.

FOLLOWING

Written and Directed by

Christopher Nolan

Cast

Jeremy Theobald *as The Young Man*

Alex Haw *as Cobb*

Lucy Russell *as The Blonde*

John Nolan *as The Policeman*

Produced by

Emma Thomas

Christopher Nolan

Jeremy Theobald

Executive Producer

Peter Broderick

Cinematography

Christopher Nolan

Edited by

Gareth Heal

Christopher Nolan

Production Designer

Tristan Martin

Sound

David Lloyd

David Julyan

James Wheeler

Music

David Julyan

UK, 1999

70 mins, B&W

35mm, 1:1.66, Stereo



A ZEITGEIST FILMS RELEASE

247 Centre St • 2nd floor • New York • NY 10013

Tel (212) 274-1989 • Fax (212) 274-1644

mail@zeitgeistfilm • www.zeitgeistfilm.com