



BIG SCREEN CLASSICS

Hidden (Caché)

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Director/Un film de: Michael Haneke

©/Presented by: Films du Losange (Paris), Wega-Film, Bavaria-Film, BIM Distribuzione

A co-production with: Arte France Cinéma, France 3 Bordeaux, ORF Film/Fernseh-Abkommen, ARTE, Westdeutscher Rundfunk

With the participation of: StudioCanal, Canal+ Centre national de la cinématographie, Österreichisches Filminstitut, Filmfonds Wien, Filmstiftung NRW

With the support of: Eurimages Conseil de l'Europe
Executive Producers: Michael Katz, Margaret Ménégoz

A Production by (Paris): Margaret Ménégoz

A Production by (Vienna): Veit Heiduschka

Co-producers: Michael Weber, Valerio De Paolis

France Line Producer: Brigitte Faure

Austria Line Producer: Michael Katz

France Production Administrator: Amira Chemakhi

Austria Production Co-ordinator: Ulrike Lässer

Unit Production Manager: Grégory Valais

Unit Manager: Grégory Bruneau

French Assistant Unit Managers:

Marie Elise Chocroun, Emmanuelle Jacobson

Roques, Tosé Riesser, Sébastien Delepine,

Laurent Lemonnier, Alexandre Vernerey

Location Managers: Thomas Pitre, Peter Ecker

Additional Location Manager: Stéphane Guerreau

France Production Administrator: Tahiri Alaoui

Austria Production Administrator: Christa Preisinger

Director of TV Scenes: François Verzele

1st Assistant Directors: Alain Olivieri, Katharina Biró

2nd Assistant Directors: Moritz von Blücher,

Kathrin Resetarits

Additional Assistant Directors: Olivier Marty, Florence Faure

Script Supervisor: Jean Baptiste Filleau

CASTING DIRECTOR: Kris Portier de Bellair

Scenario: Michael Haneke

Dialogue: Michael Haneke

Director of Photography: Christian Berger

Steadicam Operator: Carlos Cabecerán

Gaffers: Walter Stöger, Olivier Neveu

Visual Effects Supervisor: Geoffrey Kleindorfer

Special Effects: Philippe Hubin, Denis Le Doyen,

Hubert Devinck, Geoffrey Kleindorfer

Editors: Michael Hudecek, Nadine Muse

Additional Editors: Alarich Lenz, Soazic Veillon

France Art Director: Emmanuel de Chauvigny

Austria Art Director: Christoph Kanter

Set Decorator: Jérémie Duchier

Properties: Wouter Zoon, Katrin Huber

France Construction Manager: Bernard Chenevier

Austria Construction Manager: Fritz Martan

Costumes: Lisy Christl

Key Costumer: Tess Hammami

Make-up/Hairstylists: Thi Loan Nguyen,

Joël Lavau, Laurent Bozzi

Special Make-up Effects: Waldemar Pokromski

Colour Timing: Franz Rabl

Colourist: Willi Willinger

Vienna Laboratory: Listo-Film

Paris Laboratory: Éclair

Cologne Laboratory: CinePostproduktion Geyer

Sound Recordist: Jean-Paul Mugel

Sound Re-recordist: Jean-Pierre LaForce

Sound Effects: Pascal Chauvin

Publicity: Matilde Incerti

Cast:

Daniel Auteuil (Georges Laurent)

Juliette Binoche (Anne Laurent)

Maurice Bénichou (Majid)

SPOILER WARNING The following notes give away some of the plot.

At a formal level, Michael Haneke's *Hidden* contemplates one of the fundamental questions of filmmaking: where to put the camera. Watching the anonymous videos of their Paris home sent to Georges and Anne Laurent, we can't help wondering, like the couple themselves, exactly where they were filmed from. In the three-minute static shot that opens the movie, Haneke surely provides a clue for us by placing his viewpoint somewhere that, in strictly realistic terms, it could not possibly be: seemingly fixed in mid-air in the street opposite the Laurents' home (its appropriately optical name is Rue des Iris). Later, we find ourselves becoming anxious – to the point of pedantry, if not of paranoia – to locate the hidden camera on the back wall of the flat of Majid, the Algerian orphan who Georges' parents had once planned to adopt. Is that it next to the laundry basket, or are we imagining things?

Yet such tantalising hints at rational explanation are destined to frustrate. To ask where the camera is, surely, is no more useful than to ask who sent the tapes (a question that exercised journalists to the point of agitation at the film's first press conference in Cannes). That we worry about such things is not, however, a matter of missing the point: we simply find ourselves in the same anxious position as Georges, who grasps at every possible clue, but whose every action or reaction gets him deeper embroiled in a labyrinth that proves to be of his own making.

Much as we are inclined to sympathise with the bourgeois protagonists in *Hidden*, Haneke typically makes such identification problematic. Georges and Anne are presented as critical mirrors to the audience: the Laurents and their sophisticated circle are precisely the kind of people whom Haneke can count on to go and see his films. Although presented as an ostensibly coherent psychological thriller, *Hidden* is really the latest of Haneke's portraits of the bourgeois European family and its discontents: the Laurents are close relations not only of the brutalised holidaymakers in *Funny Games* but also of the violently imploding Austrian families in *The Seventh Continent* (1989) and *Benny's Video* (1992).

Once again, the family's sense of self is regulated by the media: Georges is a professional cultural arbiter, Anne an editor at an apparently prestigious publishing house. The host of a television literary discussion show, Georges' job is to be visible; yet he feels brutalised when observed at close quarters in a way that he can't control – a paradox heightened by Haneke's astute casting of two of France's most charismatic and recognisable stars, Daniel Auteuil and Juliette Binoche, as Georges and Anne.

The Laurents live a privileged life, with French highbrow culture offering a form of social protection: Georges' bookshelves, both the real ones at home and the trompe-l'oeil ones in the TV studio, resemble fortified walls. The confident sense of exclusivity shared by the couple and their circle is very much a product of performance. In one memorable scene one character, played by the priceless Denis Podalydès, holds forth for three minutes with a ludicrous shaggy-dog story to amuse a dinner party (and to bring welcome relief to the film's mounting tension).

Annie Girardot (*Georges' mother*)
Bernard Le Coq (*editor*)
Walid Afkir (*Majid's son*)
Lester Makedonsky (*Pierrot Laurent*)
Daniel Duval (*Pierre*)
Nathalie Richard (*Mathilde*)
Denis Podalydès (*Yvon*)
Aïssa Maïga (*Chantal*)
Caroline Baehr
Christian Benedetti
Philippe Besson
Loïc Brabant
Jean-Jacques Brochier
Paule Daré
Louis Do de Lencquesaing
Annette Faure
Hugo Flamigni,
Peter Stephan Jungk
Diouc Koma,
Marie Kremer
Nicky Marbot,
Malik Nait Djoudi
Marie-Christine Orry,
Mazarine Pinget
Julie Recoing
Karla Suarez
Laurent Suire
Jean Teulé
France-Austria-Germany-Italy 2004©
117 mins
35mm

The screening on Wed 27 Sep will be introduced
by Geoff Andrew, Programmer-at-Large

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Hidden accuses the French intelligentsia – and, by extension, Western society – of a concerted denial of political and social reality. The film is partly inspired by a specific incident that has tainted modern French history (a taint symbolically replicated in the spilled blood motif that adorns the mysterious drawings Georges receives along with the anonymous videotapes): the violent police action that met a 1961 Paris demonstration against French policy in Algeria. It was during this incident that the parents of Majid are presumed to have died.

As it happens, *Hidden* was released in France just as it was rocked by the eruption of a wave of rioting that spread across the country from its disadvantaged suburbs. Georges' great step into the unknown is, appropriately, a visit to a flat on the outskirts of Paris, where, just as he insists on taking control, he starts to lose it definitively. This loss of control, and of perspective, is signalled by his conviction that his family is being 'terrorised': the only way he can view the adoptive Arab brother of his childhood, whose removal to an orphanage was the direct result of younger Georges' lies, is as a terrorist.

The film could easily seem judgemental: like Georges, the viewer might ask why he should be punished for something he did as a six-year-old. The issue, however, is not the child's crime but the adult's refusal to acknowledge guilt. Confronted by Majid's son, Georges bristles. 'You'll never give me a bad conscience,' he says. 'I'm not to blame.' Haneke's attack, then, is on a culture of denial, of militant *mauvaise foi*. The film climaxes, after this encounter, in an extraordinary act of blanking out the world: Georges retreats to his bedroom, draws the curtains and goes to bed. This action, the viewer can't but notice, is similar to that of attending the cinema, and Haneke's implied message is that we can use film either to deny reality or to face it head on. Similarly, Georges' first act after the adult Majid commits suicide is to take refuge at the movies. One of the several films on show at the cinema he visits is *Deux Frères (Two Brothers)*, an ironically appropriate choice following his denial of kinship with Majid.

The question of who is sending the tapes remains unanswered, although there are several teasing possibilities. Yet there is no conclusive literal explanation, nor should there be: Haneke, after all, has adapted Kafka for the screen; and, for all its concrete realism, *Hidden*, no less than *The Castle* (1997), demands to be viewed as parable – arguably, as Haneke's most rigorous yet.

Jonathan Romney, *Sight and Sound*, February 2006