



## SHIFTING LAYERS: THE FILM SCORES OF PHILIP GLASS

# The Truman Show

### The Truman Show

**Director:** Peter Weir  
**Production Companies:** Paramount Pictures, Scott Rudin Productions  
**Executive Producer:** Lynn Pleshette  
**Producers:** Scott Rudin, Andrew Niccol, Edward S. Feldman, Adam Schroeder  
**Co-producer:** Richard Luke Rothschild  
**Unit Production Managers:** Richard Luke Rothschild, Joseph P. Kane  
**Production Auditor:** Crystal A. Hawkins  
**Location Manager (Florida):** Andrew Ullman  
**Location Manager (L.A.):** Christopher Trott  
**Post-production Supervisor:** Rosemary Dority  
**2nd Unit Director:** Micheal J. Mcalister  
**1st Assistant Director:** Alan B. Curtiss  
**Script Supervisor:** Wilma Garscadden-Gahret  
**CASTING:** Howard Feuer  
**Written by:** Andrew Niccol  
**Director of Photography:** Peter Biziou  
**Camera Operator:** Don Reddy  
**Visual Effects Supervisor:** Micheal J. Mcalister  
**Special Visual Effects:** Inc Cinesite  
**Digital Compositing:** The Computer Film Company  
**3D Matte Paintings:** Matte World Digital  
**Additional Visual Effects:** Available Light Inc, EDS, Stirber Visual Network Inc  
**Boat Effects Designer:** Peter Chesney  
**Special Effects:** Larz Anderson  
**Special Atmospheric Effects:** Bolan Jet Air  
**Graphic Designer:** Eric Rosenberg  
**Computer Displays:** Neil Clark  
**Editors:** William Anderson, Lee Smith  
**Additional Film Editing:** Kevin D. Ross  
**Production Designer:** Dennis Gassner  
**Special Design Consultant:** Wendy Stites  
**Art Director:** Richard L. Johnson  
**Set Designers:** Thomas Minton, Odin R. Oldenburg  
**Property Master:** Douglas Harlocker  
**Costume Designer:** Marilyn Matthews  
**Jim Carrey's Costumer:** Robert Mata  
**Make-up Artist Supervisors:** Ron Berkeley, Brad Wilder  
**Jim Carrey's Make-up Artist:** Sheryl Ptak  
**Hairstylist Supervisors:** Bette Iverson, Hazel Catmull  
**Jim Carrey's Hairstylist:** Anne Morgan  
**Titles:** Cinema Research Corporation  
**Tru-Talk Title Sequence Design:** Imaginary Forces  
**Opticals:** Pacific Title  
**Original Music by:** Burkhard Dallwitz  
**Additional Original Music by:** Philip Glass  
**Music Editor:** Bunny Andrews  
**Sound Design:** Lee Smith  
**Production Sound:** Art Rochester  
**Boom Operators:** Linda Murphy, Randy Johnson  
**Re-recording Mixers:** Phil Heywood, Martin Oswin  
**Dialogue Editors:** Tim Jordan, Andrew Plain  
**Effects Editors:** Rick Lisle, Peter Townend  
**Stunt Co-ordinator:** Pat Banta  
**Animals Provided by:** Birds and Animals Unlimited  
**Animal Trainer:** Cheryl Harris, Tammy Blackburn  
**Cast:**  
**Truman's World**  
Jim Carrey (*Truman Burbank*)  
Laura Linney (*Meryl*)  
Noah Emmerich (*Marlon*)  
Natascha McElhone (*Lauren/Sylvia*)  
Holland Taylor (*Truman's mother*)  
Brian Delate (*Truman's father*)  
Blair Slater (*young Truman*)  
Peter Krause (*Lawrence*)  
Heidi Schanz (*Vivien*)  
Ron Taylor (*Ron*)

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

Truman Burbank lives an unassuming small-town life, unaware that every movement in his life is anything but ordinary. His wife, his friends, the people on the streets he walks on everyday know something that is secret to Truman, and his quest to understand what is happening to him may affect the lives of people around the world. Burkhard Dallwitz composed the bulk of the score to Peter Weir's brilliant film, but Glass contributed two key new pieces, alongside the use of tracks from *Mishima*. The composer even makes a brief cameo in one scene, playing a piano.

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Film critics and preview audiences occasionally experience something extraordinary: they get to see a film absolutely cold, before it is written about, discussed, excerpted and trailed into ubiquity, before their friends feel unable to keep themselves from re-narrating the best bits. I feel extremely lucky to have walked into a preview of *The Truman Show* several months ago completely ignorant of its story. By now, most inquisitive filmgoers will already know the central conceit: Truman Burbank, to all appearances a 30-year-old insurance salesman in a superficially happy marriage, is unaware that he's also the star of a TV show. Consequently, they will be robbed of the aesthetic bliss of seeing, like Truman himself, the trick revealed piece by piece.

Despite the reservations voiced elsewhere about the film's philosophical depth, there's no denying that director Peter Weir shows his hand and conceals it with charming dexterity. The film gives it all away at the start with an opening 'credits sequence' for the series-within-the-film, but it's easy not to understand what's going on. Truman's wife Meryl (Laura Linney with sinister, apple-cheeked irony) calls Truman's existence and her own 'a truly blessed life'. The series' creator Christof (dressed all in black like a cross between a coke dealer and a kabuki stagehand) explains that, 'Nothing you see here is faked. It's merely controlled.' (This omniscience recalls the hippie-transcendent notion that 'everything happens at exactly the right time' in Weir's first feature *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, which now seems like an eerie pre-echo of *The Truman Show*.) Gradually, we realise the extent of this control and that the darkened, weirdly angled shots are not affected cinematic mannerisms from Weir and Co, but subjective views of cameras within the diegesis. By the time Meryl is extolling, with an unnatural degree of enthusiasm, the virtues of a slicing-peeling-paring kitchen gadget (which will become a comical weapon later on) many viewers tuned into the insincere, television tone-of-voice that cues product placement will already have 'got it'.

Yet even if you know *The Truman Show's* big joke, there are many lesser ones to savour. As with the kitchen gadget, the film delights in showing the hidden, evil nature of innocuous props and set dressing: the outsize moon (scale is wonderfully skewed here – look out for the gag about Mount Rushmore) is Christof's observation deck; the too-friendly, floppy-eared dog next door turns into a snarling attacker when the town goes looking for the missing Truman. Echoing the dome that encases this world, much play is made out of circles and cycles and repetitions: a golf ball is used to explain that Fiji, where Truman's true love is meant to have flown, is so much on the other side of the

Don Taylor (*Don*)  
 Ted Raymond (*Spencer*)  
 Judy Clayton (*travel agent*)  
 Fritz Dominique, Angel Schmiedt,  
 Nastassja Schmiedt (*Truman's neighbours*)  
 Muriel Moore (*teacher*)  
 Mal Jones (*news vendor*)  
 Judson Vaughn (*insurance co-worker*)  
 Earl Hilliard Jr (*ferry worker*)  
 David Andrew Nash (*bus driver/ferry captain*)  
 Jim Towers (*bus supervisor*)  
 Savannah Swafford (*little girl in bus*)  
 Antoni Corone (*security guard*)  
 Mario Ernesto Sánchez (*security guard*)  
 John Roselius (*man at beach*)  
 Kade Coates (*Truman, four years*)  
 Marcia DeBonis (*nurse*)  
 Sam Kitchin (*surgeon*)  
 Sebastian Youngblood (*orderly*)  
 Dave Corey (*hospital security guard*)  
 Mark Alan Gillott (*policeman at power plant*)  
 Jay Saiter, Tony Todd  
 (*policemen at Truman's house*)  
 Marco Rubeo (*man in Christmas box*)  
 Daryl Davis, Robert Davis (*couple at picnic table*)  
 R.J. Murdock (*production assistant*)  
 Matthew McDonough, Larry McDowell  
 (*men at newstand*)  
 Joseph Lucus (*ticket taker*)  
 Logan Kirksey (*TV host*)  
*Christof's World*  
 Ed Harris (*Christof*)  
 Paul Giamatti, Adam Tomei  
 (*control room directors*)  
 Harry Shearer (*Mike Michaelson*)  
 Una Damon (*Chloe*)  
 Philip Baker Hall, John Pleshette  
 (*network executives*)  
 Philip Glass, John Pramik (*keyboard artists*)  
*The Viewers*  
 O-Lan Jones, Krista Lynn Landolfi (*bar waitresses*)  
 Joe Minjares (*bartender*)  
 Al Foster, Zoanne Leroy, Millie Slavin (*bar patrons*)  
 Terry Camilleri (*man in bathtub*)  
 Dona Hardy, Jeanette Miller (*senior citizens*)  
 Joel Mckinnon Miller, Tom Simmons  
 (*garage attendants*)  
 Susan Angelo (*mother*)  
 Carly Smiga (*daughter*)  
 Yuji Okumoto, Kiyoko Yamaguchi,  
 Saemi Nakamura (*Japanese family*)  
 USA 1998  
 103 mins  
 Digital 4K

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**SIGHT  
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world that 'you can't get any further away before you start coming back.' Similarly, it's in a revolving door that Truman's rebellion begins.

Of course, a major paradoxical gag is the casting of Carrey in the lead, his character endowed with a first name that's just a bit too much of an allegorical nudge. He is an actor who has built a career on a kind of manic insincerity, which made him perfectly suited if irritating as a lawyer who's jinxed into telling the truth for a day in *Liar Liar*. Here, he's supposed to be the only 'sincere' person in his world, the only one who's not lying (although he later learns deception). And yet, with his gestures large as if he's trying to touch the outsized moon, his smile a row of blank Scrabble tiles, there's a sense even in the earliest scenes that he's performing for the cameras – which would be logical for someone around whom life had been choreographed since he was an infant.

What makes Carrey's self-regarding, class-clown persona so useful to the film is that it buttresses perhaps its most central theme: solipsism. Many have read *The Truman Show* as an allegory of how television obsessively watches us, of Bentham-Foucault's panopticon gone digitally out of control. What's more poignant and haunting is that it's really about how we all secretly want to be on television and see ourselves as the stars of our own home-life movies; it is impossible to leave the cinema after seeing *The Truman Show* and not, at some point, wonder if the world is watching, not experience a flicker of identification with Truman (who has already been rehearsing different roles in front of his mirror every morning, before he becomes aware of the plot around him).

This is nothing new. Solipsism is one of the defining tropes of literary modernism, threading through Joyce's *Ulysses* and most of Nabokov's work, Borges' fiction and almost every book by Philip K. Dick. But cinema and television have appropriated the theme with problematic results. In a book, the reader is always aware that a single authorial presence is playing puppetmaster; writing itself is a solipsistic process. Film's collaborative nature tugs it into the social realm. What is more, it seldom comfortably accommodates purely subjective viewpoints. We gradually come to realise that these weird shots of Truman in the beginning are the cameras' views of him, but who is filming Christof in his observatory? What being watches Sylvia watching Truman inside her flat?

Still, *The Truman Show* is a moving exploration of creation-anxiety, of the fear and hope that in a post-Darwinian world the only beings with real power are distant public figures and malevolent unknown forces ringfencing our capacity for free will. Solipsism haunts us because it's both a comfort and a terror to think that someone, something has laid all this on for us, but in fiction like *The Truman Show* characters get to make the last moves. I won't give it away here, but the conclusion of the film is both satisfying and chillingly ambiguous: Truman and the viewers get to decide – to paraphrase the series' tagline blazoned on buttons and T-shirts worn by the show's viewers – how it's going to end.

Leslie Felperin, *Sight and Sound*, October 1998