



FESTIVAL DE CANNES

OFFICIAL SELECTION
COMPETITION - 2005

PRESS PACK

The Man Who Met Himself

A film by Ben Crowe

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The Man Who Met Himself
Written and directed by Ben Crowe

Who is Stephen Maker? Did he fake his own death, or do doppelgängers really exist?

Synopsis

A mysterious call, a photograph of a man and a private detective compelled by the one case that has finally got to him. On a stark but brilliant day in London, Austin Petersen takes a job from an anonymous client, a job he knows he should refuse.

He uses the feelings of the woman who loves him to get information. But this only raises more questions than it answers, leading Petersen deeper into the maze. He discovers that the man in the photograph committed suicide 4 years before, and haunted by the unanswered questions, he subjects the dead man's family and friends to his investigation. He finds a mother and father with an idealised view of their beloved son that is in sharp contrast to the memories of his devastated ex lover and friends.

What happened to Stephen Maker? Did he fake his own death, or do doppelgängers really exist?

Petersen concludes his report but cannot close the case. Desperate, he retraces his steps to the café where he started the investigation, and realises that he has been used to bear witness to the working out of a disturbed plan. One suicide is never the end of the story.

The Man Who Met Himself

Cast

Daniel Crowe Austin Petersen

Siubhan Harrison Faye Taylor

James Brown the Client

Lucy Donovan Rachel

Voices

Tom Wontner Michael

Jennie Lathan Mrs Maker

Silas Hawkins Mr Maker
Officer Cave
Steel

Richard Trestain Officer Bell

Crew

Ben Crowe Writer
Director
Producer

James Brown Producer
Assistant Director

Preti Taneja Producer
Co-Writer

Tom Claydon 2nd Camera

Joe Smith Grip

Oli Bartlett Original music
Sound Technician

Richard Trestain & Paul Haigh Still Photography
www.imageandnature.com

The Man Who Met Himself

Technical Specifications

- Running Time: 9mins 49
- Camera: Canon 1014 XLS (Super 8mm)
- Film stock: Kodachrome 40
- Year of completion: 2005
- Screen Ratio: 4:3
- Format: Colour
- Recorded to: VHS, DVD, Mini DV, DV CAM, BETA SP, DigiBeta (PAL)
- Sound: Stereo
- Category: Fiction

The Man Who Met Himself

Director Biography

Ben's various careers have included processing fraud investigations, hauling furniture for suspect pharmaceutical companies, playing saxophone in a jazz band and wearing a uniform for GNER. Through all these jobs, he was writing and taking photos and was often accused of being an undercover journalist by his colleagues. Perhaps this was because he has also done a stint at GCHQ – but won't say what exactly his role was....

He came to film through a passion for still photography and it is the discipline of capturing a whole story in one shot that he applies to filmmaking. His entry to the world of directing came when he pitched an idea to Channel Four that was green-lighted and on screen three months later. Before this he got hands-on experience as everything from cameraman to production manager on other people's projects and his own.

Ben, who is now 27, was born in the Black Country and grew up on the North East Coast of the UK. The effects of this natural, wild landscape and the way people move through it have deeply impacted on his work.

Filmography

***What would Jesus do?* Director/Producer**
[doc series/Faction Films Channel Four/ 2004]
***Stopping Guy* Writer/Camera operator**
[short/Automatik Films/2004]
***Box Buddy* Writer/Camera**
[short/browncrowe productions/2003]
***Derelict sensation* Camera operator**
[doc/Panagea/2003]
***On the turn of a card* Camera operator**
[short/Automatik Films /2003]
***Out in the cold* Production Manager**
[short/Marchmont Productions/2001]

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The Man Who Met Himself

Director interview

In the film you deal with madness and suicide. How do you feel these issues are dealt with in society?

We don't understand suicide and as a society we don't do enough to prevent it. We accept that people kill themselves: but what drives people to it is rarely discussed, and its aftermath is ignored. It is the silence behind those issues that is problematic and talking about such things without shame can only benefit us in the long term.

The film is based on the intriguing myths around what happens when you meet your own doppelgänger ...how does this fit with the issues around suicide you have explored in the piece?

The doppelgänger is an old school bogeyman, and one of the most frightening we have. The idea that such a thing exists challenges our sense of self, our individuality and our uniqueness, and therefore our relations with other people. If our self becomes suspect everything else becomes tainted.

Why did you choose a fiction film as a medium for exploring this theme?

I feel the doppelgänger is a myth we have invented to scare ourselves. In the medium of film and the space of the cinema you can identify, project and fantasise in the psychological sense - "what if this were to happen?" At the same time as you rationally know you are safe and those things are not going to happen, you are in an environment where your conscious sense of self is suspended. What if it isn't a myth?

How important is the setting in your film?

The investigation undertaken by Austin Petersen in the film was happening parallel to me exploring the darkest and lightest corners of London. London is a city with a fragmented identity – the closer you look the more elusive it is, and that has a definite impact on the behaviour of the central characters.

How have you used the technical aspects of filmmaking to tell the story?

The story is being told from Austin Petersen's perspective but the dialogue and visuals are non-synchronised. They aren't perfectly matched because they may refer to different times and we don't even know how much of the story is being fabricated and how much is real.

Shooting on Super 8mm and Kodachrome 40 gives an ethereal quality to the picture meant to capture the shifting truth of memory.

We shot all the scenes in a mixed order, and the dialogue was separately done all in one day. Creating the soundtrack was a step-by-step process: as the edit evolved, so did the music. Putting all the fragments together in a slightly disjointed way was the last thing we did.

The Man Who Met Himself

Facts and Figures

...the shocking

- The number of young men under 35 committing suicide in Britain has doubled in the last 20 years.
- Every day, five men under 35 take their own lives.
- The majority of suicides are triggered by depression but a quarter are caused by severe mental illness (source: BBC)

...the strange but true

- The idea for the film came while the director was working as a bouncer for GNER
- The first draft of the script was written on ticket stubs during night shifts at Kings Cross station
- The proprietor of the Bloomsbury Café allowed the filming to take place on his premises because the Brunswick Centre was due to be knocked down. It has since been reprieved
- The film was shot against some of London's finest examples of Brutalist architecture.
- The two lead actors got their hair cut 19 times over the three-month shoot. During this time the director shaved once
- The film stock used (Kodachrome) was traditionally used for home videos
- The bootleg version of the film and the footage for the trailer was filmed entirely off Ben's bathroom wall using a broken projector

....in an other life

- Siubhan is in the ensemble for Les Miserables, and also understudies Fontine
- The producers respectively count photocopiers, advise the Government on elections issues and are 'in between jobs'.
- The actor playing Petersen has never appeared in The Bill