

Hidden (Caché) [15]

2005 Fr/Aus/Ger/It 119 mins

UK released	27 January 2006
Director	Michael Haneke
Screenplay	Michael Haneke
Cinematography	Christian Berger
Cast	Daniel Auteuil (Georges Laurent) ; Juliette Binoche (Anne Laurent) ; Maurice Bénichou (Majid) ; Annie Girardot (Georges' mother) ; Bernard Le Coq (Georges' Editor in Chief); Daniel Duval (Pierre) ; Nathalie Richard (Mathilde); Denis Podalydès (Yvon)

A stiletto-stab of fear is what Michael Haneke's icily brilliant new film delivers - not scary-movie pseudo-fear, but real fear: intimately horrible, scalp-prickling fear. It is a stalker-nightmare with a shiver of the uncanny and a double-meaning in the title: hidden cameras and hidden guilt. A famous Parisian TV presenter receives menacing, mysterious "surveillance videos" at his home, showing scenes from his private life. How on earth has the stalker filmed these? There is no dramatic musical score, none of the traditional shocks or excitements, just an IV-drip-drip-drip of disquiet leading finally to a convulsion of horror.

Hidden is partly a parable for France's repressed memory of la nuit noire, the night of October 17 1961, when hundreds of Algerian demonstrators in Paris were beaten and killed by the police. Hidden is about the prosperous west's fear and hatred of the Muslim world and those angry pauperised masses once under our colonial control, and over whose heads a new imperium is being negotiated in the Middle East and beyond. Haneke is often described as the "conscience" of European cinema: but he is more a Cassandra, announcing a coming catastrophe and fervently imagining its provocation. The bad dream into which Haneke's characters are plunged is scrutinised with forensic clarity and dispassion. The opening scene is one continuous shot of the apartment exterior where celebrity intellectual Georges (Daniel Auteuil) lives with his publisher wife Anne (Juliette Binoche) and their 12-

year-old son. Then we discover that this is one of the creepy tapes that Georges is being sent, with the cold sheen of high-definition video indistinguishable from the rest of the film that we are watching. Television star Georges is horrified to be observed on a basis quite other than his accustomed, glamorous visibility. More than that, he suspects he knows his tormentor: an Algerian called Majid to whom he did something unspeakable when they were both six years old. So this is turning the tables. But is Majid sending these videos? Or is there another explanation?

The performances by Auteuil and Binoche as Georges and Anne are superb. When the videos threaten his family and his livelihood, Georges seems chiefly paralysed by the need to carry on as if nothing has disturbed his gilded public life of success. Anne is enraged by his failure to trust her. His mother - an outstanding performance from Annie Girardot - is exasperated also by his dishonesty and evasion, but simply shrugs, having known it for a lifetime. Binoche is utterly convincing as the woman who finds that, in extremis, she doesn't know who her husband is.

Most troublingly of all, Haneke shows us vital scenes from the point of view of this blank, affectless video-avenger; he invites us to share his destructive gaze. This really does implicate you. You feel like you too are participating in this terrible, remorseless destruction.

Hidden is Michael Haneke's masterpiece: a compelling politico-psychological essay about the denial and guilt mixed into the foundations of western prosperity, composed and filmed with remarkable technique. It is one of the great films of this decade.

Peter Bradshaw, *The Guardian*, 27 January 2006 (abridged)

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