

# GFF 2014: The Double (Richard Ayoade, 2014)



If there's a topic that Richard Ayoade tackles with impeccable skill, it's infatuation. In his break out hit, the 2010 coming-of-age drama 'Submarine', he created a film about two young teenagers hopelessly in love but surrounded by break up and melancholy. In his latest feature, The Double, he once again creates an unrequited infatuation, but never veers into the obsessive.

It tells the story of Simon, a timid man who day by day is ignored and forgotten by his co-workers and mother. As all he yearns for slips from his hands, a man walks into the office. His name is James. Confident and daring, he could not be more different from Simon, apart from the fact that he looks identical to him. As James teaches Simon the ways to entice the woman he loves, James carries out a deceitful act of sabotage that drives Simon to insanity.

The Double presents itself as a 'comedy' on paper, and bar the few and far between lines of dark humour, it could not be further from it. Haunting and psychotic, it verges on this fine tightrope of insanity that drags you with it as it teeters off either side. It's a bizarre turn for Ayoade, whose comic background would suggest he couldn't make a thriller as fine as this, but to his credit he does it seemingly effortlessly, and with a sensational amount of skill. In fact, it wouldn't be ridiculous to suggest that Ayoade's effort here makes him one of Britain's best modern directors. It lends itself, through its harrowing score and masterful cinematography, to the horror greats of the seventies and eighties. It's bizarre, at times terrifying but with each and every frame drags you into the pit of your seat.

The performances, particularly Jesse Eisenberg as the both shy and vindictive leads of Simon and James, are scarily good. Eisenberg gives a career defining performance. The dual aspect of it also gives Mia Wasikowska, as the Simon's love interest, a character that's both caustic and charming. She's a fine young actress and gives a performance that's one of her own personal bests. There are numerous other cast members that crop up over the ninety minute runtime, both Wallace Shawn and Noah Taylor make great appearances as delusional co-workers, and Ayoade has even squeezed in roles for his Submarine alumni Yasmin Paige and Craig Roberts too.

The Double owes just as much to those in post production as it does to those during the filming of it. With an impeccable British direction, great international performances and a script and score to die for, The Double is truly one of the most enticing, interesting and genuinely excellent films of the year so far.

*The Double plays at the Glasgow Film Festival on both Saturday 22nd and Sunday 23rd February*