

# Double Life a lyrical film about human loneliness

by Pedram Fouladianpour

Twenty-five years ago, two women were born on the same day; Veronika (Irene Jacob) in Poland, Veronique (Irene Jacob) in France. They were like identical twins born in different places.

Veronique and Veronika share a passion for music, and are involved in complicated love affairs. They both feel that they are not alone, that they have a double somewhere. The only time they meet is at a demonstration in Krakow, where Veronika watches Veronique hastily take pictures and leave on a tour bus.

These are the basic elements of Krzysztof Kieslowski's latest film, *The Double Life of Veronique*. The film is the work of one of the most important filmmakers of our time.

One remarkable aspect of *The Double Life* is that Kieslowski avoids tedious intercutting between the two main characters. As it happens, the two episodes are linked by a brilliantly shot, metaphoric scene of love making.

The visual representation of such an event is closely linked to the core of the narrative. *The Double Life*, however simple on the surface, is a journey into the human soul. It deals with the relationship between human beings, irrespective of time or space.

This is a theme which has intrigued many artists, particularly Russian director Andrei Tarkovsky. Unlike others who have dealt with this issue, Kieslowski tells his story without any pretensions. He creates a lyrical film concerning loneliness and the yearning



## Double Life, one good film

Irene Jacob and Jerzy Gudejko cycle off into the sunset in Krzysztof Kieslowski's *The Double Life of Veronique*. Following the lives of two identical women (both played by Jacob) who never actually meet, but who are perhaps spiritually linked. *The Double Life of Veronique* will probably be judged one of the best films of the year.

ing for human contact.

The symbolism, verbal and visual, is simple. The narrative structure of *The Double Life* is an important symbol. The smooth transitions between

the two characters and their mutual passions keep the mind busy despite the film's simplicity.

On another level, *The Double Life* deals with perception, both visual (as

represented by Veronique/Veronika's glass ball) and aural (the mysterious tape that Veronique receives in the mail which leads her to her potential lover).

## FILM

*The Double Life of Veronique*  
directed by Krzysztof Kieslowski  
starring Irene Jacob and Philippe Volter  
Miramax Films

Kieslowski's impeccable direction is one of the most exciting aspects of the film. If good directing is unity of form, style and content, Kieslowski is an excellent director; all his elements are mixed to perfection.

After graduating from the famous Lodz Film School (whose graduates include Roman Polanski and Jerzy Skolimowski), Kieslowski made a series of award winning documentaries at the beginning of the 70s. After films like *Blind Chance* and *No End*, Kieslowski made the 10 hour epic *The Decalogue*.

Hailed by many critics as the film of the decade, *The Decalogue* concentrated on morality in modern Poland. Kieslowski reedited the fifth and sixth episodes and released the feature length *A Short Film About Love* and *A Short Film About Killing*. The latter won several awards, including the jury prize at the 1988 Cannes Film Festival.

Jacobs' performance is brilliant (she was awarded the Best Actress award at Cannes in 1991). Her portrayal of the two characters contrasts their similarities and distinctions. Jacobs' passion keeps us interested in her situation, drawing us into the realm Kieslowski wants us to explore: an abstract theory of relationships between human beings.

*The Double Life of Veronique* will be judged one of the best films of the year, if not the best.

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