

ArtReview

Shezad Dawood: Piercing Brightness

An exclusive look at the trailer of the artist's first feature film

By ArtReview



Artist Shezad Dawood's first feature film *Piercing Brightness*, sits between those often-uneasy bedfellows of artist video and cinematic film. While aesthetically the director trades on abstract imagery, non-linear scene sequencing and an impressively atmospheric and fear-laden soundscape (scored by Makoto Kawabata of Acid Mothers Temple) that might traditionally be found in the gallery rather than the multiplex; the movie also boasts discernible plotting and characterisation. Premiered last night at the Sci-Fi London Film Festival, the film's storyline is a homage to any number of sci-fi classics in which aliens live incognito among us. Calling themselves the 'Glorious 100', Dawood's extraterrestrials have lived on Earth (and particular, the north of England town of Preston), for many years, shifting between human bodies (at one stage one of the aliens, who takes the form of Pakistan-born newsagent lists his previous 'shells' all of whom ran the same corner shop, a personal history which proves a microcosm of the changing demographics of England). Yet there now exists a degree of dissent among this hidden alien race. Some wish to remain here, others want to fulfill the original aim of the mission and return to their home planet. Two new aliens land (seemingly teleported via some luminescent stones reminiscent of the one Jeff Bridges' alien carries in John Carpenter's 1984 *Starman*) bringing this debate to a head.

Dawood – who has mined themes of cultural migration and identity affectively throughout his career – is playing with the alien genre's historic predilection for metaphor. Yet where *Red Scare* propaganda pieces such as *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956) were heavy handed, *Piercing Brightness* is a nuanced discussion on the alien cultural other and the alienation of the immigrant.

Piercing Brightness is in selected cinemas from 7 June.