

# **NYman with a Movie Camera**

A film by Michael Nyman

## *Synopsis*

NYman with a Movie Camera is a 64 minutes feature film conceived and directed by Michael Nyman. The film presents a shot-by-shot reconstruction of Dziga Vertov's iconic film, Man with a Movie Camera, replacing the original sequences with footage from Michael Nyman's own film archives shot over the last two decades. Deeply rooted in Vertov's original ideas concerned with "the Perception of Truth", the documentation of "life as it is" and that of "life caught unawares", Nyman's film attempts to capture the essence of "what is there", and reflects on what he calls the Persistence of glance, a multi-sensorial experience of time as it occurs, of life as it happens and as recorded by the human memory. The film is a modern-day take on experimental documentary film making through the bias of cinematographic collage. It proposes to renew a discourse with the ideological and aesthetic precepts once defended by Vertov in his pursuit of the ultimate "cleaning up" of film language from the "corrupting influence" of Drama.

Vertov's Man With A Movie Camera records the progression of one full day synthesizing footage shot in Moscow, Riga, and Kiev. The film begins with titles that declare it "an experiment in the cinematic communication of visible events without the aid of subtitles, nor the aid of a scenario, or the aid of theater." It is often described as an urban documentary. Yet the subject of the film is also the film itself – from the role of the cameraman to that of the editor to its projection in a theatre and the response of the audience. It is a film within a film, made with a range of inventive effects – it dissolves, employs split screen, slow motion and freeze frame techniques – all of which are now embedded in digital editing software.

Nyman's previous engagement with Vertov's film dates back though to 2003 when he composed the original musical score for Man with a Movie Camera. The encounter with the Russian master was instrumental in defining Nyman's own aesthetic phraseology and experimentation with the medium of film and documentary. In Man with a Movie Camera, the shot sequence follows a systematic and paced visual pattern in an attempt to mimic the language of the visible, the raw and the unscripted. Vertov's driving vision was to capture "film truth"— that is, fragments of reality, which when organized together have a deeper truth that cannot be seen with the naked eye. Whilst Vertov's rhythmic patterning unifies the aesthetic surface of his film, Nyman's choice of footage for NYman with a Movie Camera, is a random punctuation of a visual text drawn from his own film and sound repertoires and from his photographic archives. The result is a patchwork of imagery embroidered in Vertov's threads of the newsreel and of