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SPOTO ON HITCHCOCK

We are very pleased to welcome to London Donald Spoto, world-famous expert on the late Sir Alfred Hitchcock, who is best-known for an acknowledged standard work, 'The Art of Alfred Hitchcock'. Three screenings followed by seminars led by Mr Spoto will provide an opportunity to reconsider the great trilogy, Psycho, The Birds and Marnie.

Developing the character of a restless and rootless blonde, the three films in fact examine timeless human problems: the fear of abandonment, the weakness of human judgment, the tyranny of past over present, the annihilation of personality, and the possibility of redemption through the healing of memories. The trilogy is Hitchcock's ultimate meditation on a collective moral flaw in the universe, and on the nature and quality of our perceptions through and beyond film art.—Donald Spoto.

Psycho Tue 26 Aug 6.30

Gothic elements certainly accumulate in Psycho — ominous gingerbread houses, dark and stormy nights, a confined and demented relative, a hidden treasure, mirrors aplenty. But perhaps the film has attracted audiences and film-makers (and has inspired many poor imitations) not because it's a shocker, but for better and deeper reasons, appreciated only after multiple viewings and considerable reflection. In fact Psycho is a meditation on how a romantic dream can

become a nightmare, how the past can overwhelm the present, how a personality can be lost by self-delusion and deadly obsessions. Steeped in the literary and artistic traditions of Gothicism, Anglo-American Puritanism and Mom-ism, and lamenting the triumph of the kingdom of death, Psycho is at last sheer catharsis.—DS. USA 1960/With Anthony Perkins, Janet Leigh.

The Birds Wed 27 Aug 6.30

Hitchcock's use of birds as a marker of chaos (a tradition drawn from classical and Renaissance art) is crucial for an appreciation of Psycho. But the bird imagery is ultimately realised in The Birds, where the sudden rush of wings expresses and makes explicit jealousy, anger, and sexual and family tensions. Of all his films, The Birds discloses its riches least readily. It's the most demanding film in the Hitchcock catalogue. Structured around an alternating series of conversations about being abandoned and the violent, inexplicable bird attacks that represent and actualise that terror, the film is a darkly lyrical puzzle-poem about human need, the nature of the universe, and the possibility of salvation.—DS. USA 1963/With Rod Taylor, 'Tippi' Hedren.

Marnie Fri 29 Aug 6.20

Not at all the lurid, facile psychological case history some critics have called it, Marnie is the conclusion of the Hitchcock trilogy about the relationship between past and present and a haunting, tender film about our childish adulthoods. The blond thief of Psycho, frantic to escape her past, joined a world swallowed up by death. The Birds concerned a chilly blonde caught in her own past traps of social and sexual subterfuge. Marnie is a frigid blond thief finally paralysed by her past and forced to cry out for help. This is perhaps Hitchcock's most personal film; in any case it is certainly the most bizarre, elusive and touching of his late career.—DS. USA 1964/With 'Tippi' Hedren, Sean Connery.

