

## Film Review: Undeniably Unique Oddity of ‘Berberian Sound Studio’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on June 13, 2013 - 12:48pm

- [Berberian Sound Studio](#) [2]
- [Brian Tallerico](#) [3]
- [Film Review](#) [4]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [5]
- [Peter Strickland](#) [6]
- [Toby Jones](#) [7]

CHICAGO – If David Lynch directed a Giallo it might have come out something like “Berberian Sound Studio,” a truly surreal oddity opening this week at the Siskel Film Center, starring the great Toby Jones as a man driven mad by his work on a ‘70s horror film. Or is it? Like “Eraserhead” or “Inland Empire,” there are times when the film simply defies interpretation. As in I don’t think there’s an answer to some of your questions. I’m not even sure any of it supposed to be taken literally in the slightest. It’s a film that folds in on itself like someone going slowly mad. Or perhaps he was mad all along. If you’re willing to put up with the frustration that will greet you if you try to intake “Studio” literally, there’s a lot to like here, although I will admit that it’s a film I admire for its originality more than I actually enjoy.



Rating: **3.5/5.0**

Gilderoy (Jones) is a British sound engineer who arrives at an Italian studio to begin Foley work on a horror flick called “The Equestrian Vortex.” Writer/director Peter Strickland cleverly never even shows us the film (other than a very Argento title sequence), focusing more on Gilderoy and his co-worker’s responses to it and sound work for it. We hear the horrendous dialogue and screaming and watch Gilderoy fine tune the sound effects: A watermelon smash here, something to replicate the sound of hairs being pulled for torture, etc. It’s clear that Gilderoy is a bit uncomfortable with the violence he’s being asked to “amplify” if you will as his wincing reactions convey and the reminders that he’s never worked on a film like this before. Why was he asked for this project specifically?



[Read Brian Tallerico’s full review of “Berberian Sound Studio” in our reviews section.](#) [8]

Or was he? As Gilderoy’s work begins to seep deeper into his sanity, poisoning it like the noise pollution that Chuck Palahniuk has written about in a few of his books, “Berberian Sound Studio” becomes less of a traditional horror film or even drama and more of a cinematic nightmare. Hints that things aren’t what they seem really pick up when Gilderoy’s employers can’t reimburse him for his flight there because they can’t find a record that he took one. Things start to feel more malevolent around the always-low-lit studio as the soundtrack of screams gets louder. Is Gilderoy being driven crazy by a movie or was he always crazy within this movie? Layers start to turn in on themselves until the final act when film stock, dubbing, and the other tricks of the trade start to divide not on “The Equestrian Vortex” but on “Berberian Sound Studio” itself.

I’m a big fan of cinema that messes with audience expectation to produce tension and fear. Some of Roman Polanski, David Cronenberg, and David Lynch’s work do just that – reach a point where asking questions about the narrative isn’t only impossible, it’s missing the point. However, those great films have an urgency that I found missing in “Berberian.” I was always intrigued by Gilderoy’s saga but I was never sucked into his nightmare like I believe Strickland hopes his viewer to be. The best psychological horror films make you a participant and I felt like an observer during all of “Berberian Sound Studio.”



[Continue reading for Brian Tallerico’s full “Berberian Sound Studio” review.](#) [8]

*“Berberian Sound Studio” stars Toby Jones. It was written and directed by Peter Strickland. It opens in Chicago at the Siskel Film Center on June 14, 2013.*



Berberian Sound Studio

*Photo credit: Match Factory*

**Source URL (retrieved on Apr 19 2024 - 9:16pm):**

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- [2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/berberian-sound-studio>
- [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/brian-tallerico>
- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/film-review>
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