

12 Movies That Rival the Mind-Blowing Visuals of 'Hardcore Henry'

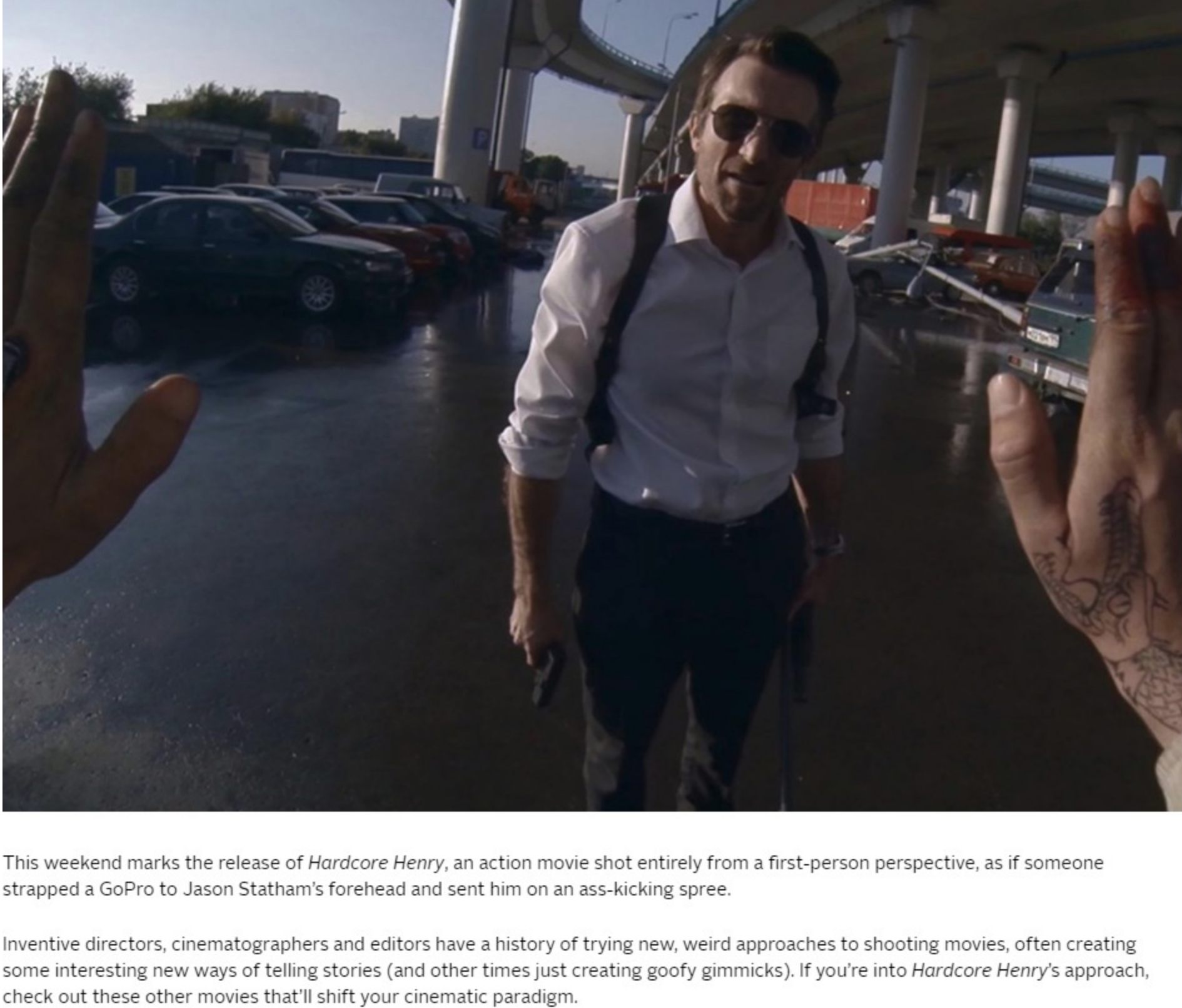
By Phil Hornshaw
April 8, 2016

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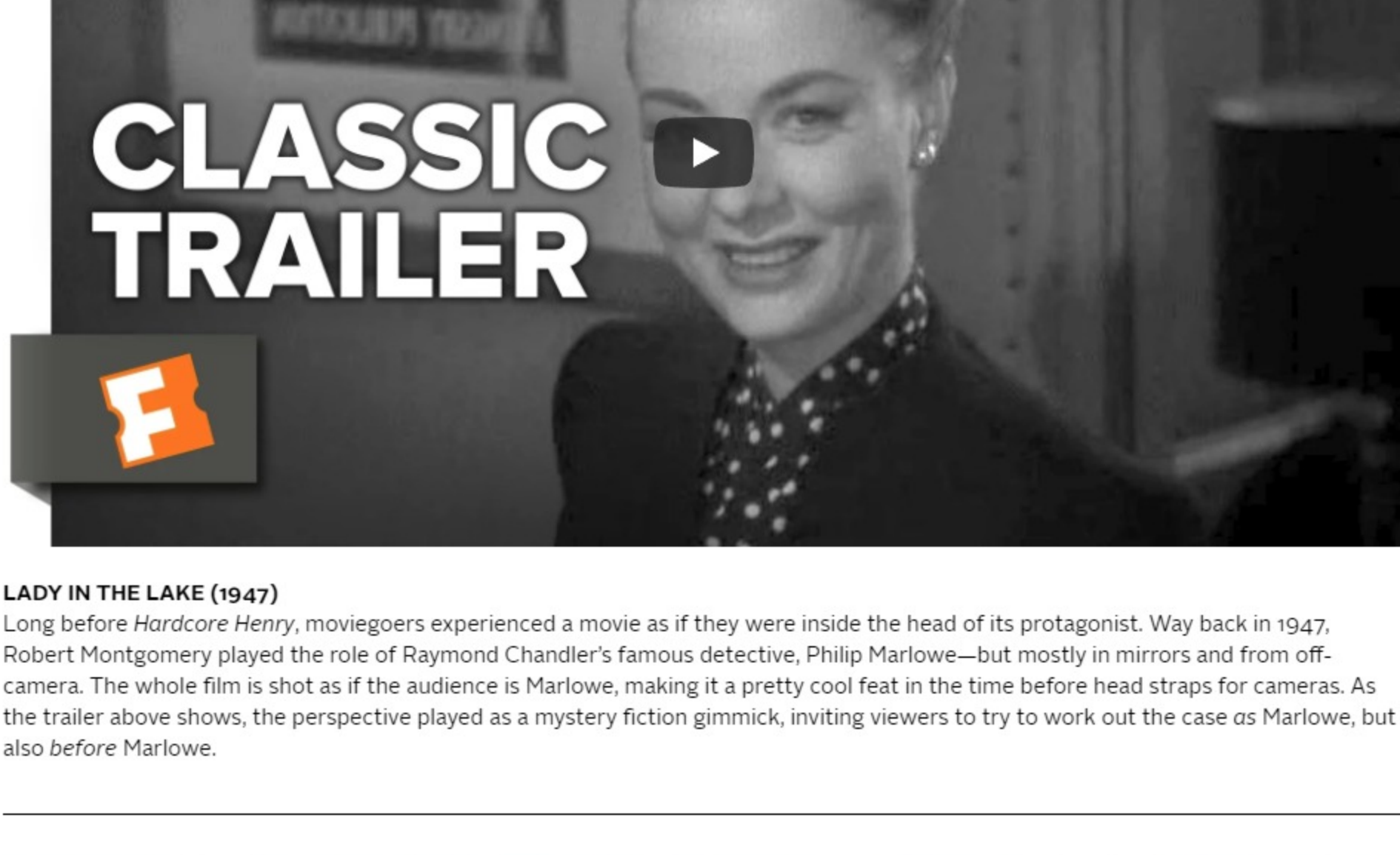
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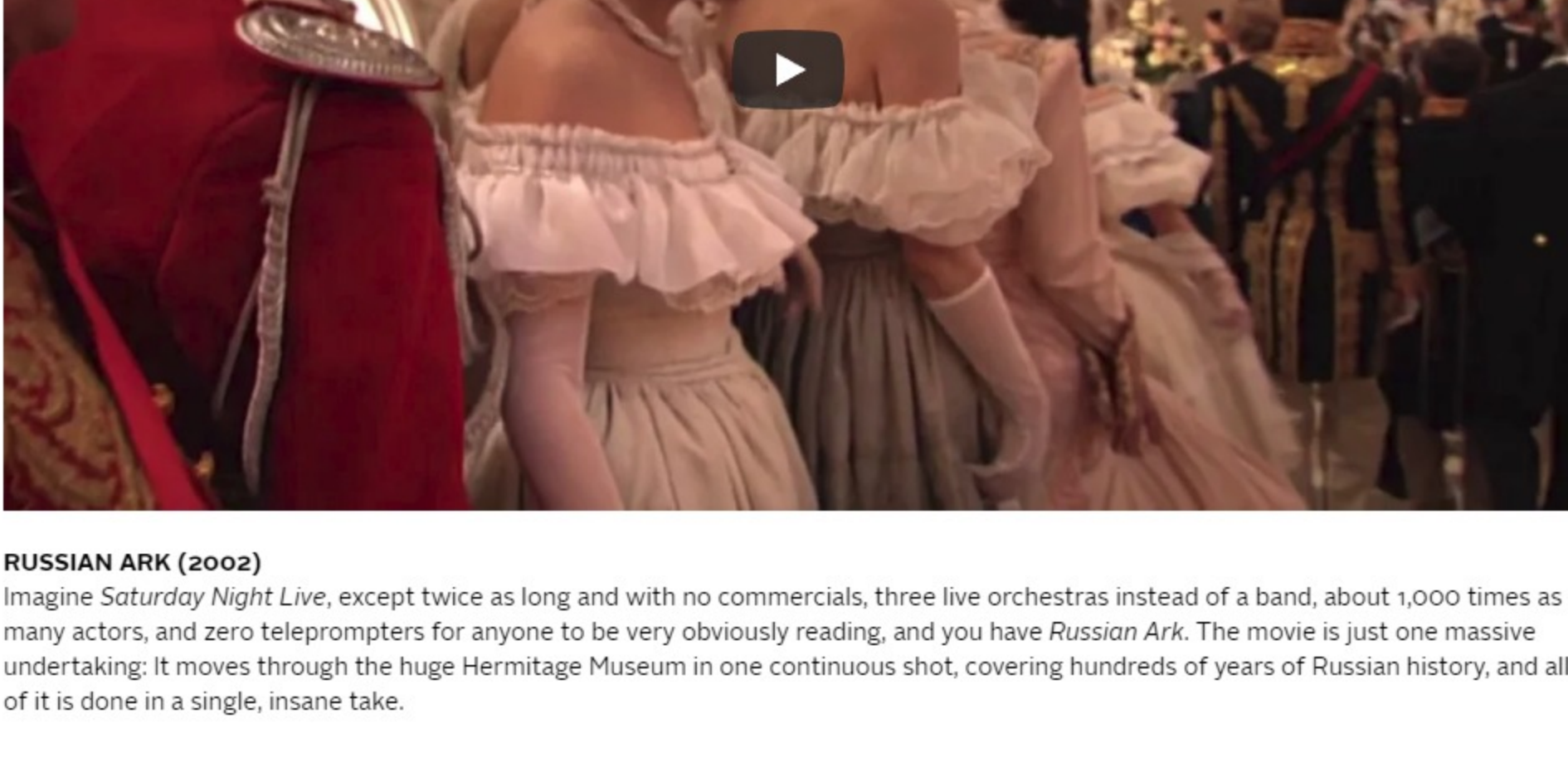


This weekend marks the release of *Hardcore Henry*, an action movie shot entirely from a first-person perspective, as if someone strapped a GoPro to Jason Statham's forehead and sent him on an ass-kicking spree.

Inventive directors, cinematographers and editors have a history of trying new, weird approaches to shooting movies, often creating some interesting new ways of telling stories (and other times just creating goofy gimmicks). If you're into *Hardcore Henry's* approach, check out these other movies that'll shift your cinematic paradigm.

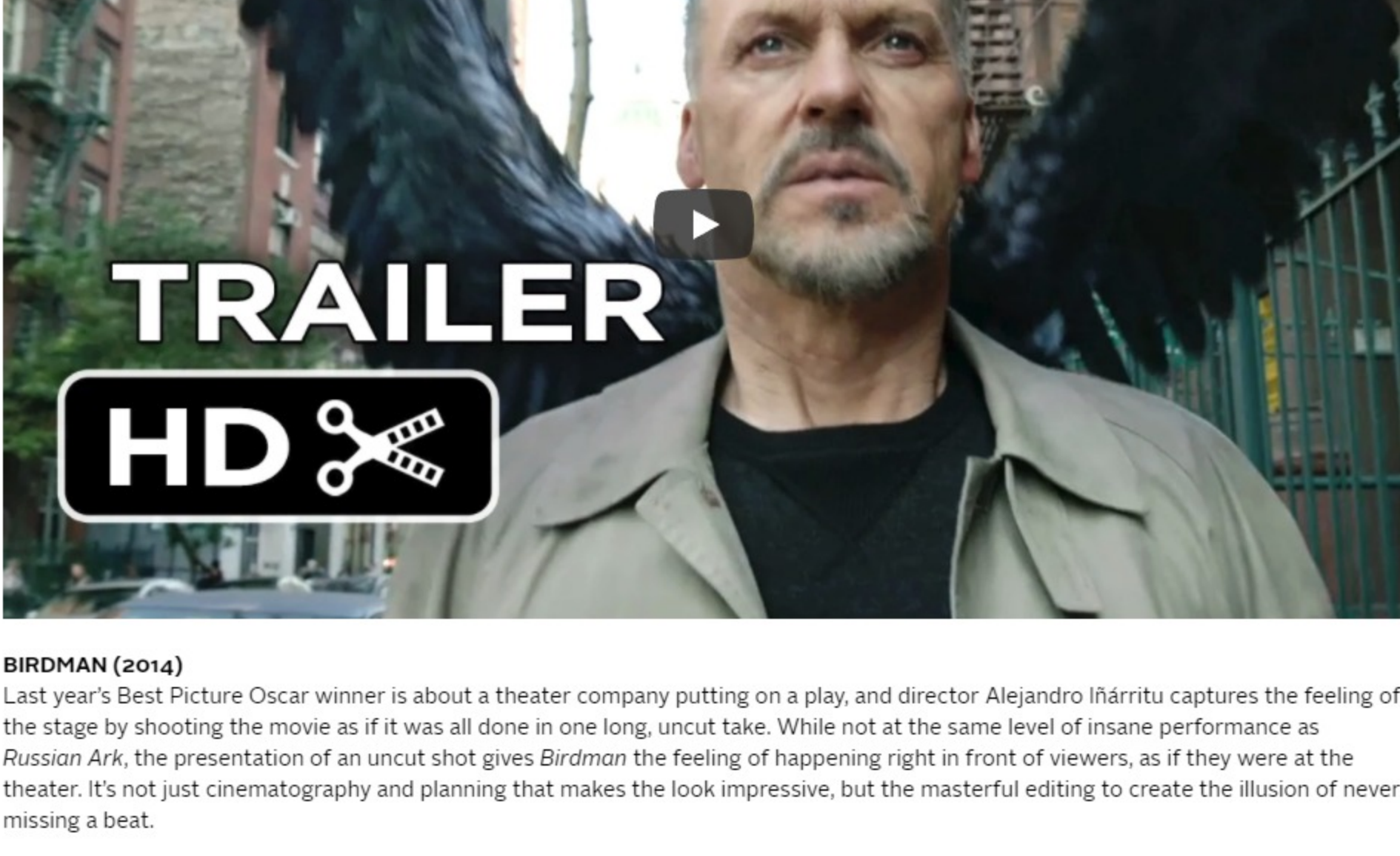


LADY IN THE LAKE (1947)
Long before *Hardcore Henry*, moviegoers experienced a movie as if they were inside the head of its protagonist. Way back in 1947, Robert Montgomery played the role of Raymond Chandler's famous detective, Philip Marlowe—but mostly in mirrors and from off-camera. The whole film is shot as if the audience is Marlowe, making it a pretty cool feat in the time before head straps for cameras. As the trailer above shows, the perspective played as a mystery fiction gimmick, inviting viewers to try to work out the case as Marlowe, but also before Marlowe.

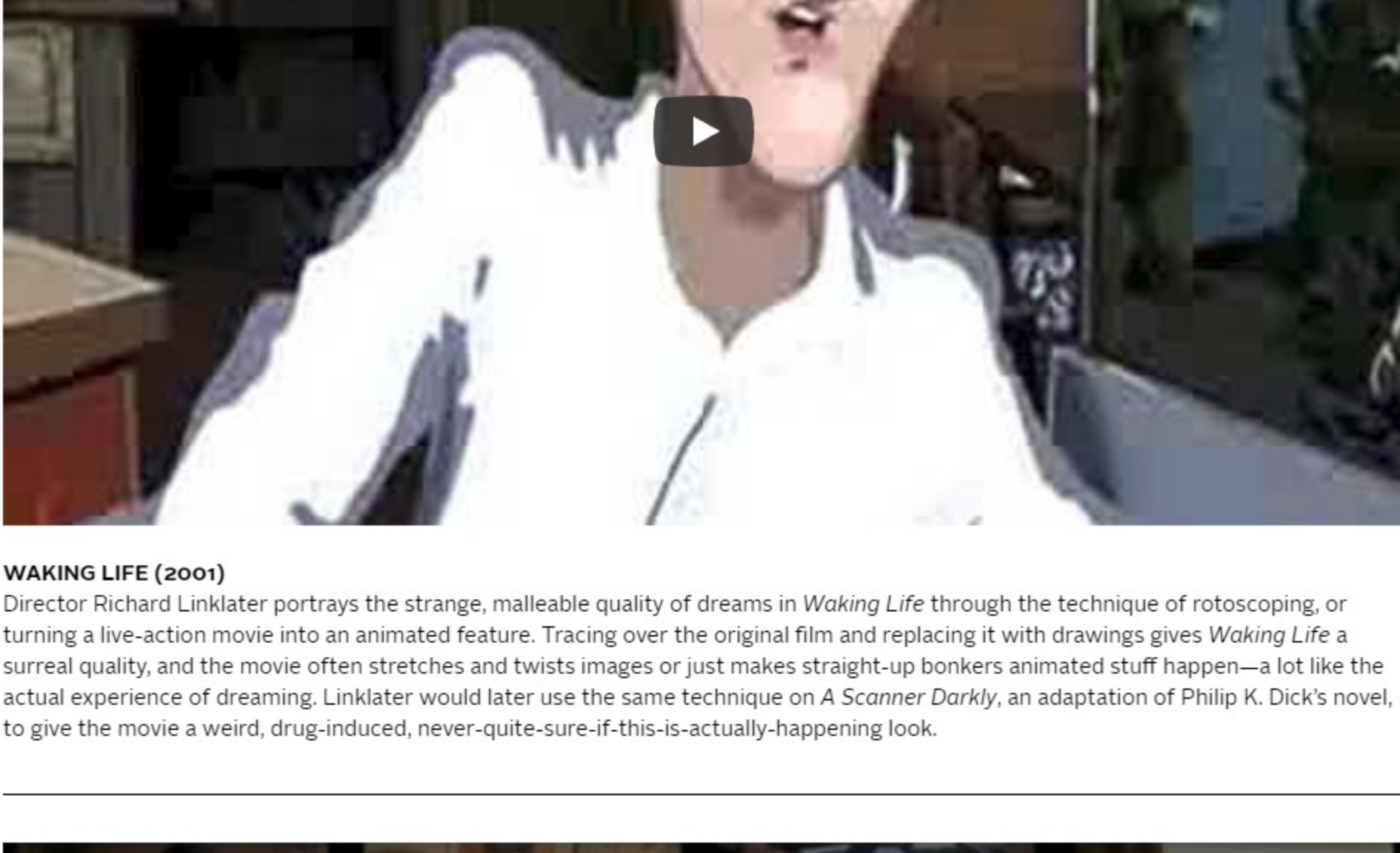


RUSSIAN ARK (2002)
Imagine Saturday Night Live, except twice as long and with no commercials, three live orchestras instead of a band, about 1,000 times as many actors, and zero teleprompters for anyone to be very obviously reading, and you have *Russian Ark*. The movie is just one massive undertaking: It moves through the huge Hermitage Museum in one continuous shot, covering hundreds of years of Russian history, and of it is done in a single, insane take.

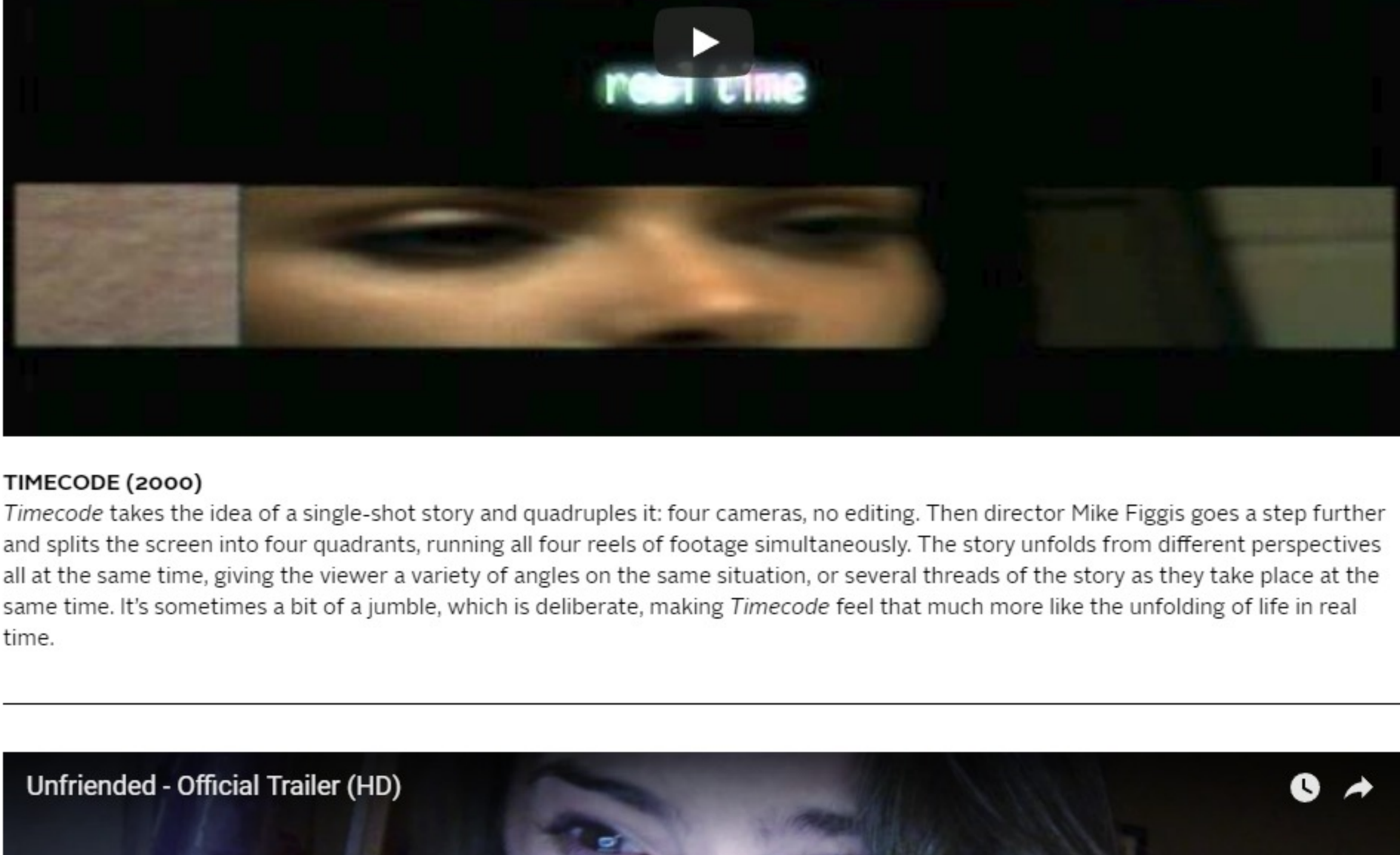
ENTER THE VOID (2010)
A drug trip combined with a journey through the afterlife, *Enter the Void* is another first-person film that goes so far as to portray when drug dealer protagonist Oscar blinks. The movie gets psychedelic as Oscar smokes illicit substances, and then even weirder after he's killed in a police drug bust, sending him traveling through surreal depictions of his past, present and future. *Enter the Void* director Gaspar Noe goes one better than just depicting a movie from a character's perspective: He tries to take audiences into his main character's extremely strange, subjective experiences.



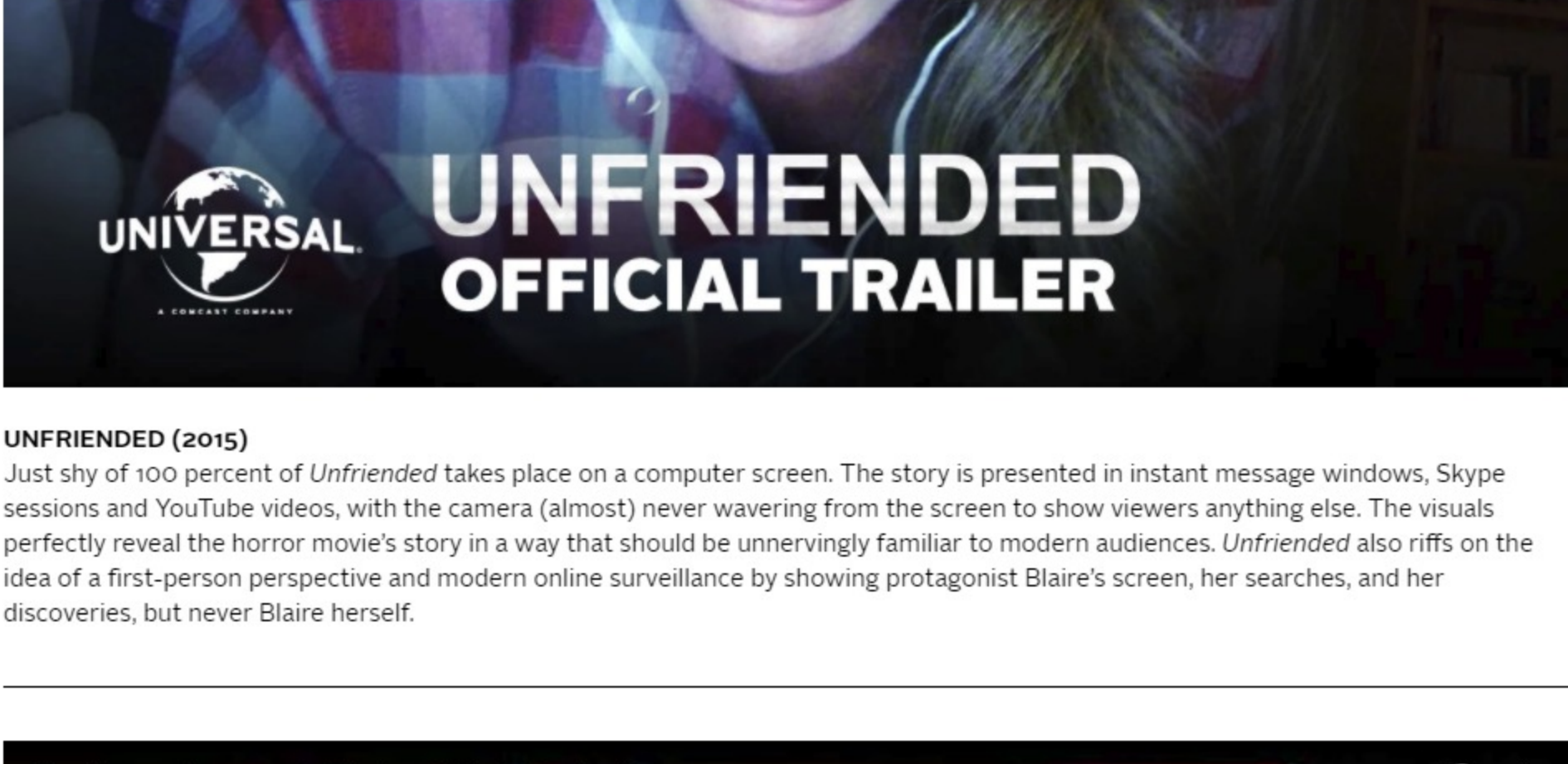
BIRDMAN (2014)
Last year's Best Picture Oscar winner is about a theater company putting on a play, and director Alejandro Iñárritu captures the feeling of the stage by shooting the movie as if it was all done in one long, uncut take. While not at the same level of insane performance as *Russian Ark*, the presentation of an uncut shot gives *Birdman* the feeling of happening right in front of viewers, as if they were at the theater. It's not just cinematography and planning that makes the look impressive, but the masterful editing to create the illusion of never missing a beat.



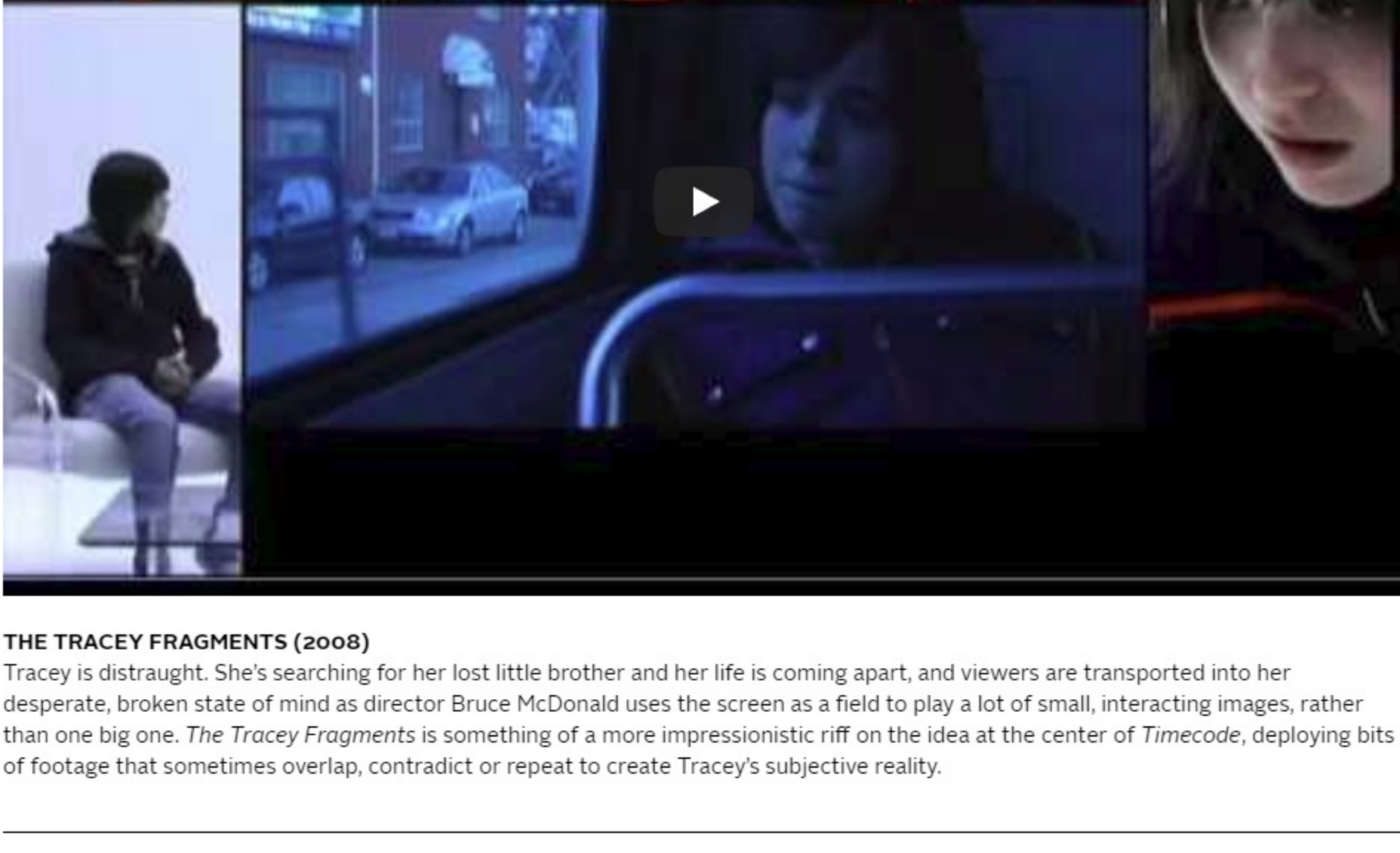
WAKING LIFE (2001)
Director Richard Linklater portrays the strange, malleable quality of dreams in *Waking Life* through the technique of rotoscoping, or turning a live-action movie into an animated feature. Tracing over the original film and replacing it with drawings gives *Waking Life* a surreal quality, and the movie often stretches and twists images or just makes straight-up bonkers animated stuff happen—a lot like the actual experience of dreaming. Linklater would later use the same technique on *A Scanner Darkly*, an adaptation of Philip K. Dick's novel, to give the movie a weird, drug-induced, never-quite-sure-if-this-is-actually-happening look.



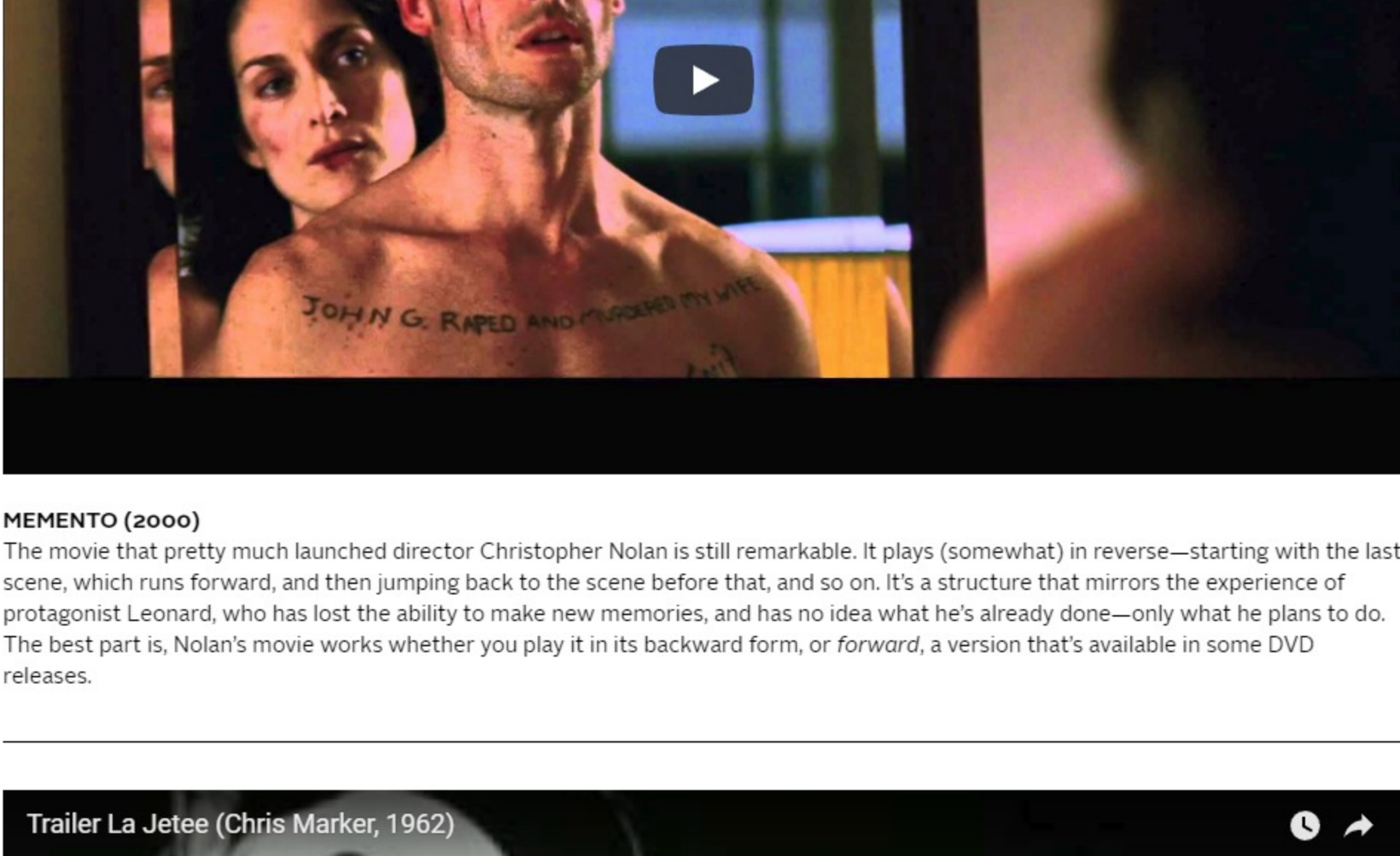
TIMECODE (2000)
Timecode takes the idea of a single-shot story and quadruples it: four cameras, no editing. Then director Mike Figgis goes a step further and splits the screen into four quadrants, running all four reels of footage simultaneously. The story unfolds from different perspectives all at the same time, giving the viewer a variety of angles on the same situation, or several threads of the story as they take place at the same time. It's sometimes a bit of a jumble, which is deliberate, making *Timecode* feel that much more like the unfolding of life in real time.



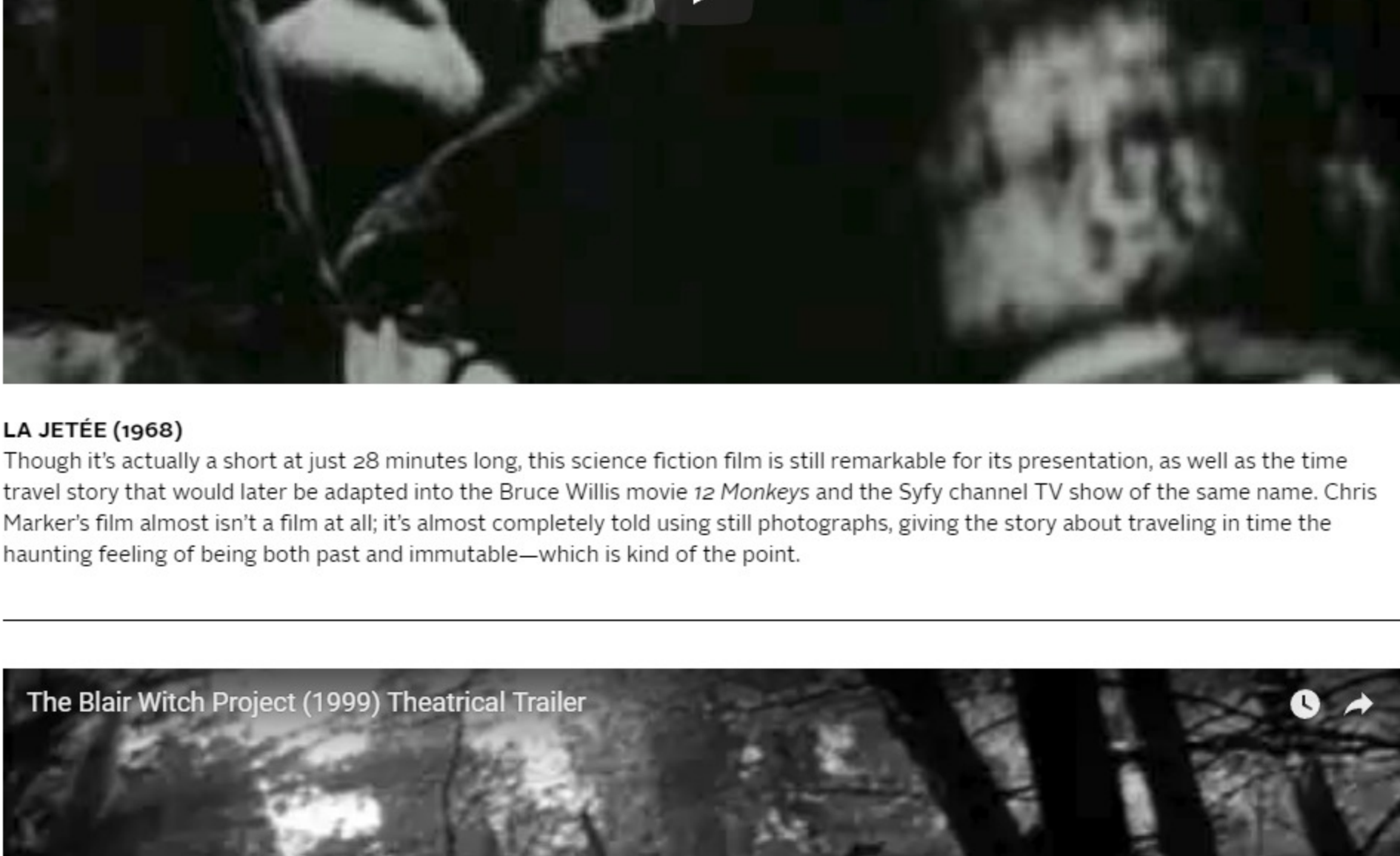
UNFRIENDED (2015)
Just 70 of 100 percent of *Unfriended* takes place on a computer screen. The story is presented in instant messages, Skype sessions and YouTube videos, with the camera (almost) never wavering from the screen to show viewers anything else. The visuals perfectly reveal the horror movie's story in a way that should be unnervingly familiar to modern audiences. *Unfriended* also riffs on the idea of a first-person perspective and modern online surveillance by showing protagonist Blaine's screen, her searches, and her discoveries, but never Blaine herself.



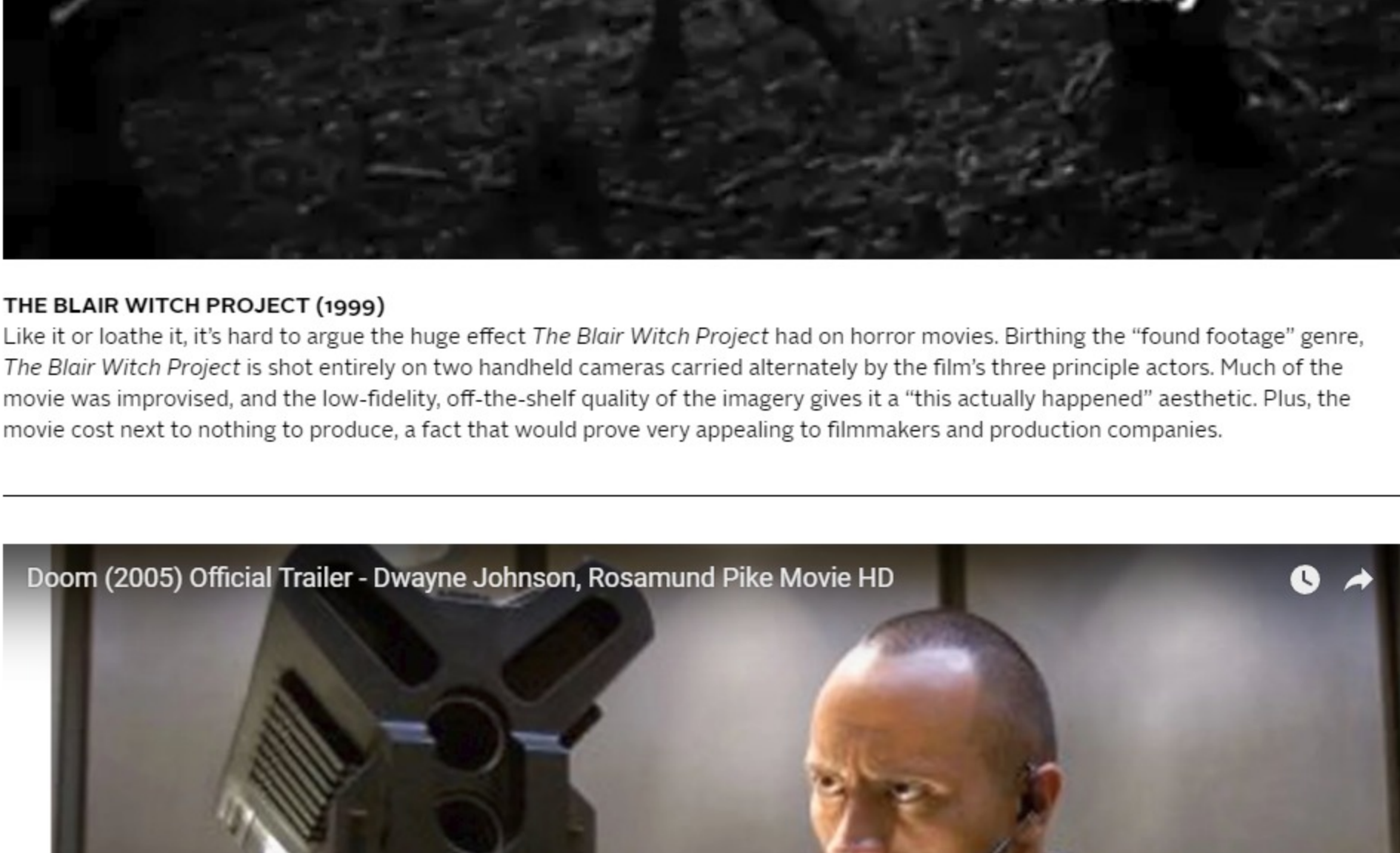
THE TRACEY FRAGMENTS (2008)
Tracey is distraught. She's searching for her lost little brother and her life is coming apart, and viewers are transported into her desperate, broken state of mind as director Bruce McDonald uses the screen as a field to play a lot of small, interacting images, rather than one big one. *The Tracey Fragments* is something of a more impressionistic riff on the idea at the center of *Timecode*, deploying bits of footage that sometimes overlap, contradict or repeat to create Tracey's subjective reality.



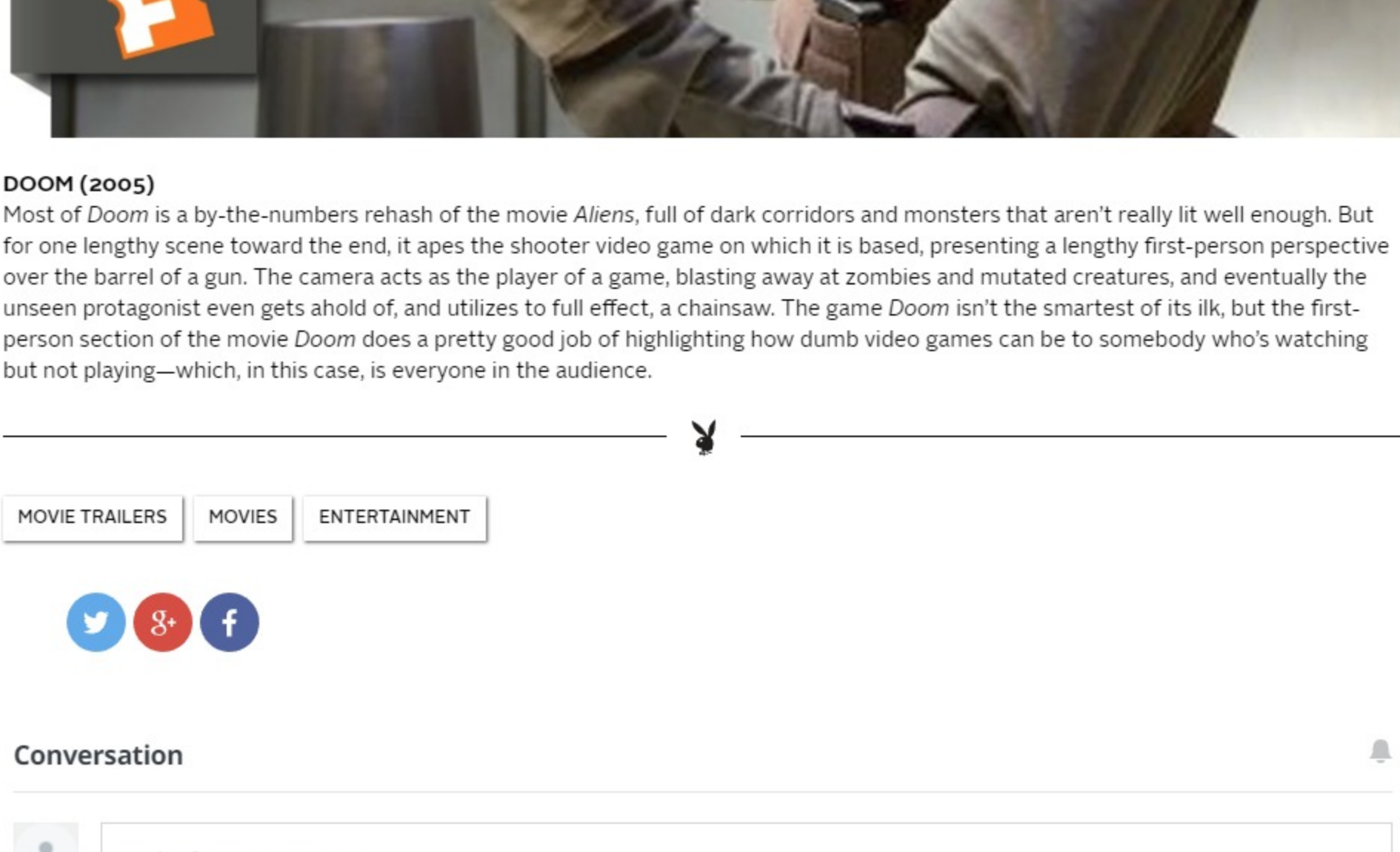
MEMENTO (2000)
The movie that pretty much launched director Christopher Nolan is still remarkable. It plays (somewhat) in reverse—starting with the last scene, which runs forward, and then jumping back to the scene before that, and so on. It's a structure that mirrors the experience of protagonist Leonard, who has lost the ability to make new memories, and has no idea what he's already done—only what he plans to do. The best part is, Nolan's movie works whether you play it in its backward form, or forward, a version that's available in some DVD releases.



LA JETÉE (1962)
Though it's actually a short at just 28 minutes long, this science fiction film is still remarkable for its presentation, as well as the time travel story that would later be adapted into the Bruce Willis movie *12 Monkeys* and the Syfy channel TV show of the same name. Chris Marker's film almost isn't a film at all: It's almost completely told using still photographs, giving the story about traveling in time the haunting feeling of being both past and immutable—which is kind of the point.



THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT (1999)
Like it or loathe it, it's hard to argue the huge effect *The Blair Witch Project* had on horror movies, birthing the "found footage" genre. *The Blair Witch Project* is shot entirely on two handheld cameras carried alternately by the film's three principle actors. Much of the movie was improvised, and the low-fidelity, off-the-shelf quality of the imagery gives it a "this actually happened" aesthetic. Plus, the movie cost next to nothing to produce, a fact that would prove very appealing to filmmakers and production companies.



DOOM (2005)
Most of *Doom* is a by-the-numbers relish of the movie *Aliens*, full of dark corridors and monsters that aren't really lit well enough. But for one lengthy scene toward the end, it apes the shooter video game on which it is based, presenting a lengthy first-person perspective over the barrel of a gun. The camera acts as the player of a game, blasting away at zombies and mutated creatures, and eventually the unseen protagonist even gets ahead of, and utilizes to full effect, a chainsaw. The game *Doom* isn't the smartest of its ilk, but the first-person section of the movie *Doom* does a pretty good job of highlighting how dumb video games can be to somebody who's watching but not playing—which, in this case, is everyone in the audience.

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