



My Own Private Idaho

Shakespeare (and Welles) Meet
New Queer Cinema



My Own Private Idaho: Production

- Early 1980s: Van Sant begins writing screenplay, inspired by Shakespeare's *Henry IV*, Elliott's *Silas Marner*, Fellini's *The Satyricon*, and various Dickens novels
- Melds two completed scripts—one an adaptation of *Henry IV*—and one short story
- Offered high-budget studio films after success of *Drugstore Cowboy* (1989), but van Sant not wanting to make this type of film
- Financed/distributed in US by Fine Line Features/[New Line Cinema](#)
- Improvisational nature of shoot, with actors allowed to develop lines/actions for director approval and van Sant determining shot composition while shooting (vs. storyboarding)
- Van Sant's Portland street buddies tutoring young male actors in how to recognize and solicit johns
- Budget: \$2.5 million; US domestic box office gross: \$6.4 million

Shakespeare and Welles

Shakespeare

- “Unless hours were cups of sack and minutes capons and clocks the tongues of bawds and dials the signs of leaping-houses and the blessed sun himself a fair hot wench in flame-coloured taffeta . . .” ([Henry IV, Part 1. 1.2](#)).
- “Unless hours were lines of coke, dials looked like the signs of gay bars, or time itself were a fair hustler in black leather . . .” (*My Own Private Idaho*).

Welles

- [Chimes at Midnight](#) (1965):
Film about Hal/Falstaff relationship



Screening Cues

- Visualization of Mike's point-of-view—techniques to evoke his consciousness
- Jump cuts
- Theme of family and home
- Color
- “Road” movie
- Scott's movement from homosocial/homosexual world of street to heterosexual world of upper class corporate world