

# MIKE LEIGH



## IN FOCUS

Week One

## Welcome to *Mike Leigh In Focus*

### Week One

*'I'm never bored. That's the trouble with everybody -- you're all so bored. You've 'ad nature explained to you and you're bored with it. You've 'ad the living body explained to you and you're bored with it. You've 'ad the universe explained to you and you're bored with it. So now you just want cheap thrills and like plenty of 'em, and it dun't matter 'ow tawdry or vacuous they are as long as it's new, as long as it's new, as long as it flashes and fuckin' bleeps in forty fuckin' different colours. Well, whatever else you can say about me, I'm not fuckin' bored!'*

### Naked – Mike Leigh

I think there are broadly two types of film critic (here come the broad strokes): ones that consider Mike Leigh to be the purveyor of bleak social realism and those who consider him to be one of the funniest filmmakers who has ever put stories to celluloid.

Obviously, the correct answer – and I think most of his fans understand this - is that both impressions are true.

I have never laughed harder than at a Mike Leigh. Nor have I ever cried harder. All human life, as they say, is here.

He skewers pretensions with empathy, examines trauma with empathy and offers up a vision of England, both past and present, with empathy. Because that is the key feature of Mike Leigh's stories – care for others. The many ways we demonstrate it and the many ways we fail to.

Much is made of the improvised nature of his process – hours, days, months spent working with actors to develop characters and situations, long before a filming script is set in place.

But that is just a means to an end, an attempt to incorporate as much human truth as possible into the films themselves.

It's an approach that has led to a peerless filmography, with seldom a false step taken.

In our first week of ten, we'll be looking at some of his earliest works, including his first – and for more than a decade, his only – theatrical feature and his acclaimed work for television.

Kenton Hall

May 2025

## FILMS – WEEK ONE

*Bleak Moments (1971)*

*A Mug's Game (1973)*

*Hard Labour (1973)*

*The Permissive Society (1975)*

*Nuts in May (1976)*

*The Kiss of Death (1977)*

## SUGGESTED READING

*Mike Leigh on Mike Leigh*

Amy Raphael and Mike Leigh

*Mike Leigh: Interviews*

Howie Movshovitz