

# MIKE LEIGH



## IN FOCUS

Week Five

## Welcome to *Mike Leigh In Focus*

### Week Five

Here at the halfway point of our Mike Leigh course, we've reached a genuine turning point in a career that had, by the point, had been barrelling along for nearly 30 years.

Like many an artist before him, Leigh was about to become, in the eyes of the international audience, an overnight success. Everyone simply remained schtum on the precise number of nights that had passed.

*Naked* had been a breakthrough film, but when you look at the awards scorecard, the leap from *Naked's* BAFTA nomination for *Best British Film* (an award designed, it seems, to ensure that homegrown cinema stood a fighting chance against better funded campaigns from abroad) to the Oscar, BAFTA and Cannes attention given to *Secrets and Lies*, it's clear that a leap forward, commercially at very least, had been made.

Why?

*Naked*, despite its prestige, was an abrasive film – perhaps the most abrasive Leigh had made up until that point. With *Secrets and Lies*, he returned to the world of family dynamics he had so successfully investigated in previous work.

And something struck a chord. With audiences and with critics. It was a film that was talked about, but it was also a film that garnered a great deal of affection, not something you can entirely manipulate into being.

There would be other films to come that would be equally applauded, but it could be argued that there has yet to be another quite so *loved*.

We'll also be looking at its follow-up *Career Girls*, which often gets glossed over in favour of *Secrets*, though it's no less of an achievement and features the much missed Katrin Cartlidge.

And, as a special treat, a rarely seen short starring Jim Broadbent – *A Sense of History*.

FILMS – WEEK FIVE

*A Sense of History (1992)*

*Secrets and Lies (1996)*

*Career Girls (1997)*

## SUGGESTED READING

*Mike Leigh on Mike Leigh*

Amy Raphael and Mike Leigh

*Mike Leigh: Interviews*

Howie Movshovitz