

MIKE LEIGH



IN FOCUS

Week Three

Welcome to *Mike Leigh In Focus*

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And welcome back to the third week of *Mike Leigh in Focus*. This week, we take our final trip into the pre-feature work of Leigh, including some more of the rarely seen *Five Minute Films* and another rare short *The Short and Curlies* (which includes David Thewlis' debut, five years before he would lead Leigh's *Naked*).

It would be easy to see the television films and plays as dry runs for the features to follow, given Mike Leigh's clear desire to return to cinema after the – at this point in the story – one-off that was *Bleak Moments*. But as we've seen, it's far from that simple. Leigh's working style is not only being developed, project by project, but much of his eventual, if unofficial, repertory company – both in front of and behind the camera - are being gathered.

It's a career not in waiting, but in progress.

By the time we reach *Meantime* in 1983, it is increasingly difficult to draw a pure dividing line between the work intended for theatrical release and that intended for television. The types of characters in which Leigh has a clear and abiding interest are all in place as, as previously mentioned, is his method of mining for them alongside his talented casts.

It also continues to be astounding how many *stars* were made in Leigh's furnace, household names cropping up regularly, either in the early days of their careers or in their actual, like Thewlis, debuts.

Leigh's eye for ability is something that seldom gets enough credit.

By next week, when we will close out the 80s and head into the 90s, his most accomplished is still ahead of him, but entire careers have been built on bodies of work of lesser stature than what he had already produced.

FILMS – WEEK THREE

Five Minute Films (1982)

Meantime (1983)

Five Days in July (1985)

The Short and Curlies (1987)

SUGGESTED READING

Mike Leigh on Mike Leigh

Amy Raphael and Mike Leigh

Mike Leigh: Interviews

Howie Movshovitz