

# The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release  
March 1992

## LIFE COULD BE BETTER: THE FILMS OF MIKE LEIGH

April 10 - 24, 1992

The first New York retrospective of the British filmmaker Mike Leigh opens at The Museum of Modern Art on April 10, 1992. Comprising twelve features and seven short films, **LIFE COULD BE BETTER: THE FILMS OF MIKE LEIGH** offers a comprehensive look at the work of this comedic chronicler of the everyday. Featuring ten New York premieres, the series is on view through April 24.

Mike Leigh's films are a mix of social satire and pathos about middle-class and working-class families coping with the daily business of living in contemporary Great Britain. His tales of domestic bliss and pain are thrown into high relief with humorous, accurate detail. At the center of Leigh's work is his method of allowing his cast to create the characters and the final script through extensive rehearsal periods.

**LIFE COULD BE BETTER** includes Leigh's first film *Bleak Moments* (1971), about a young office worker, her mentally disabled sister, and assorted misfits; *Nuts in May* (1976), in which a vulnerable city couple on a "back-to-nature" holiday cling to each other in an uncomfortable environment; and *Abigail's Party* (1977), adapted from Leigh's stage production, a comedy of manners concerning an obsessive hostess with upper-class pretensions. Leigh's most acclaimed films are also shown: *Meantime* (1983), which deals with the tensions in a family with unemployed males; *High Hopes* (1988), a scathing

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satire of Thatcher's England; and *Life is Sweet* (1990), which is centered around a family with twin teenage daughters, one of whom has an eating disorder.

Mike Leigh has a considerable reputation in Great Britain as a theater and television director. Born in 1943, he studied acting, theater, filmmaking, and design, establishing a career as a playwright and theater director before making *Bleak Moments*. Between this auspicious debut and *High Hopes* lie nine features and several shorts that were commissioned for British television. Five of the shorts, dramatic vignettes made for the BBC and known as "The Five Minute Films," accompany feature films in this series.

**LIFE COULD BE BETTER: THE FILMS OF MIKE LEIGH** was organized by Adrienne Mancia, curator, and Jytte Jensen, assistant curator, Department of Film.

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No. 20

For further information or film stills, contact Barbara Marshall, film press representative, Department of Public Information, 212/708-9752.

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**LIFE COULD BE BETTER: THE FILMS OF MIKE LEIGH**  
April 10 - 24, 1992

Exhibition Schedule

**Friday, April 10**

- 2:30 p.m. *Bleak Moments.* 1971. With Anne Raitt and Sarah Stephenson.  
110 min.
- 6:00 p.m. *A Light Snack.* 1975. With Margaret Heery. 5 min.  
*Nuts in May.* 1976. With Roger Sloman and Alison Steadman.  
84 min.

**Saturday, April 11**

- 2:00 p.m. *Afternoon.* 1975. With Rachel Davies. 5 min.  
*Hard Labour.* 1973. With Liz Smith. 70 min.
- 5:00 p.m. *The Birth of the 2001 F.A. Cup Final Goalie.* 1975.  
With Richard Ireson and Celia Quicke. 5 min.  
*Grown-Ups.* 1980. With Philip Davis. 95 min.

**Sunday, April 12**

- 2:00 p.m. *Four Days in July.* 1984. With Brid Brennan and  
Desmond McAleer. 99 min.
- 5:00 p.m. *Meantime.* 1983. With Tim Roth and Gary Oldham. 104 min.

**Monday, April 13**

- 2:30 p.m. *The Short and Curlies.* 1987. With Alison Steadman and David  
Thewlis. 18 min.  
*High Hopes.* 1988. With Philip Davis and Ruth Sheen. 110 min.
- 5:00 p.m. *Probation.* 1975. With Herbert Norville. 5 min.  
*Who's Who.* 1978. With Richard Kane. 75 min.

**Tuesday, April 14**

- 2:30 p.m. *Life is Sweet.* 1990. With Alison Steadman and Jim  
Broadbent. 102 min.
- 6:00 p.m. *The Kiss of Death.* 1977. With David Threlfall and Kay Adshead.  
80 min.

**Thursday, April 16**

- 2:30 p.m. *Four Days in July.* See Sunday, April 12 at 2:00.
- 6:00 p.m. *Old Chums.* 1975. With Tim Stern. 5 min.  
*Home Sweet Home.* 1982. With Timothy Spall. 90 min.

**Friday, April 17**

- 3:00 p.m. *The Permissive Society.* 1975. 20 min.  
*Abigail's Party.* 1977. With Alison Steadman and Tim  
Stern. 105 min.
- 6:00 p.m. *The Permissive Society/Abigail's Party.* See above.

**Saturday, April 18**

- 2:00 p.m. *The Birth of the 2001 F.A. Cup Final Goalie/Grown-Ups.*  
See Saturday, April 11 at 5:00.
- 5:00 p.m. *Bleak Moments.* See Friday, April 10 at 2:30.

**Sunday, April 19**

2:00 p.m. *The Short and Curlies/High Hopes.*  
See Monday, April 13 at 2:30.

5:00 p.m. *Probation/Who's Who.* See Monday, April 13 at 6:00.

**Monday, April 20**

2:30 p.m. *Afternoon/Hard Labour.* See Saturday, April 11 at 2:00.

6:00 p.m. *Life is Sweet.* See Tuesday, April 14 at 2:30.

**Tuesday, April 21**

2:30 p.m. *Old Chums/Home Sweet Home.* See Thursday, April 16 at 6:00.

6:00 p.m. *A Light Snack/Nuts in May.* See Friday, April 10 at 6:00.

**Thursday, April 23**

2:30 p.m. *Meantime.* See Sunday, April 12 at 5:00.

6:00 p.m. *The Kiss of Death.* See Tuesday, April 14 at 6:00.

**Friday, April 24**

3:00 p.m. *The Permissive Society/Abigal's Party.* See Friday, April 17.

6:00 p.m. *The Permissive Society/Abigal's Party.* See Friday, April 17.

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