



SECRETS & LIES

UK 1995; 141 minutes; Certificate 15

Director: Mike Leigh
Screenplay: Mike Leigh
Photography: Dick Pope
Music: Andrew Dickson

Cast:

Maurice	Timothy Spall
Monica	Phyllis Logan
Cynthia	Brenda Blethyn
Roxanne	Claire Rushbrook
Hortense	Marianne Jean-Baptiste
Jane	Elizabeth Berrington
Dionne	Michelle Austin
Paul	Lee Ross
Stuart	Ron Cook



All families have their secrets, and lies to keep those secrets hidden, but the Purley family has more than most.

In unfolding the stories of the characters and piecing the bits together Mike Leigh brings us a world of contrasts and barely concealed symbolism in a tragi-comic scenario.

All the principal characters, and many of the minor ones, give excellent performances. Brenda Blethyn's portrayal of Cynthia, which won her a well-deserved Best Actress award at Cannes, could so easily have tipped over into a caricature of a working-class loser, all short term gratification, via cigarettes and booze. Instead our sympathies are quickened by the utterly believable panic reaction, when she receives a call from her first-born illegitimate daughter who was adopted at birth. Equally credible is her disbelief when she discovers that the daughter is black, but the subsequent friendship that develops between the two, points up the unrewarded drudgery and lovelessness that has been Cynthia's life up till now.

Hortense, the black middle class daughter (Marianne Jean-Baptiste) is full of sensitivity for others, not seeking for her birth mother till her adoptive parents have died lest it look like ingratitude. She is in stark contrast to Cynthia's second illegitimate child, the unlovely, moody Roxanne, played by Clair Rushbrook, whose character verges on the grotesque. This is the sort of contrast of which Leigh is master. The irony of the poor relationship Cynthia has with the daughter to whom she has given her life, and the warm rewarding relationship that develops with the daughter in whose care she has had no part is unmistakable.



Ungrudging care followed by intermittent contact, driven by guilt, is also the pattern of her relationship with her younger brother, Maurice. Superbly played by Timothy Spall he gives a convincing performance as the decent, responsible man whose successful photographic business is the result of his own hard work, but whose achievements are never enough to satisfy his fastidious houseproud wife, Monica who despises Cynthia.

With the characters introduced the story is developed gradually, allowing scope for some excellent set pieces - Maurice delivering a patter to encourage his clients to relax; Monica's acute attack of PMT, which would be hilarious were it not so tragically realistic in its depiction of the way in which people who once thought they loved one another seek to wound. The real reason behind their coldness is their failure to have a child. This only emerges in the final scene, which follows yet another set piece - the excruciating social unease of Roxanne's twenty first birthday party, when all the main characters are brought together for the first time. The secrets and lies that have held them apart and together for the best part of twenty five years are exposed and ultimately the family members are brought closer. As in real life though, the whole story is never revealed in all its details, and Hortense ends up knowing less of her father than Roxanne does of hers.

Throughout Leigh avoids overstatement while echoing the realities and subtle nuances of British suburban life. He is not above turning the immediately obvious on its head to keep the story interesting while maintaining realism.



Smile: Timothy Spall

Hortense though black is middle class. Cynthia is white, but is at the bottom of the social and economic heap. Maurice is thought by his secretary to "have it all", but lives a life of quiet desperation, and lest we should miss the perilous nature of success and the stress it brings, his predecessor at the studio is briefly introduced, returned from Australia minus wife and job, and well on his way to alcoholism. Monica's materialistic perfectionism is countered by what she sees as her fundamental failure as a woman - her inability to have a baby. Neither can we avoid comparing, Hortense, who is seeking for truth, being in a profession that enables people to see better and therefore presumably make more of their lives with Maurice, whose job is to record moments of perfection that may never be reflected in the "happy ever after".

This film is very much in the British tradition of low budget films about real people, or at least people who could be real, in direct contrast with the glossier, less believable, characters of more costly Hollywood productions. The film wins our sympathies for the players without descending into sentimentality. The Palme d'Or won at Cannes in May last year was well deserved.

Sheila Coles

STEVE HAD TO GO !

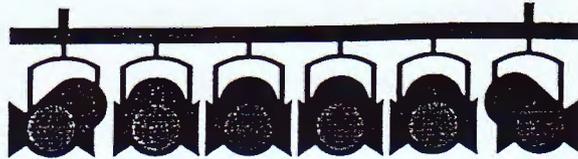
Many Club members will remember Steve Jarvis. He was for a time its Hon. Secretary and spent several years on the Committee. Steve is also responsible for the format of our reaction sheets.

Steve goes way back to the Club's time at 'The 'Litten Tree', (then known as 'The Cotteridge Hotel'). With nowhere there for storing the Club's equipment, Steve kindly offered space for it in his garage and before & after every show - whether or not he intended to see the film - he would be there to ensure that everything was in order.

Due to the long hours working up in London, Steve was unable to get along to the Club last Season and in July started a new job in Welwyn Garden City. As a result, he has moved from Woking to North Finchley - close to 'The Phoenix' repertory cinema [I know it well from my student days in Muswell Hill - Ed.] where he will continue to indulge his love of films.

Steve has gone but he certainly won't be forgotten for his enthusiasm and all he did for the Club. Best of luck to him in his new surroundings and lets hope he can come and see us at Mayford.

TONY ROZELAAR.



WNCC - AMENDED RUNNING ORDER FOR 1998

All films will continue to be shown on Thursdays at 8.00 pm, but due to a conflict with existing bookings at Mayford Village Hall the six dates between Christmas and Easter have had to be rearranged from the published programme, as follows:-

Date	Film
Jan 15th 1998	THE LAST DETAIL
Jan 29th 1998	VERONIKA VOSS
Feb 12th 1998	SHINE
Feb 26th 1998	PYGMALION
Mar 12th 1998	LETTER FROM AN UNKNOWN WOMAN
Mar 26th 1998	FARGO

The three dates and films for the post-Easter period, commencing on April 30th 1998, remain unaltered, viz:-

Apr 30th 1998	COPYCAT
May 14th 1998	RICHARD III
May 28th 1998	SCHOOL FOR SCOUNDRELS <i>[plus Annual General Meeting]</i>

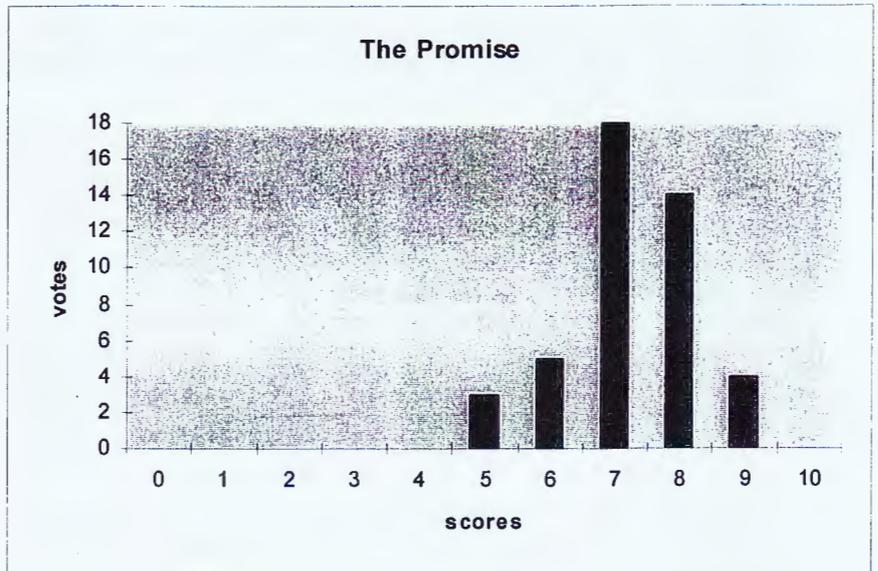
See separate handout for directions to Mayford Village Hall, which is situated in Saunders Lane, Mayford.

THE PROMISE (27/11/97)

44 reactions, average score 7.25

Some of your comments

- Far too bland.
- Held my interest throughout.
- A very "brings it home" exercise.
- Sad but true.
- Where were Pink Floyd?!!
- Wonderfully romantic.



- An intelligent film that did not attempt a simplistic/sentimental approach.
- Particularly interesting having been in Germany a few months after the wall came down.

Helen Sayers

Thursday 15th January 1998 (please note change of date)
Our first evening at Mayford Village Hall features

JACK NICHOLSON in Hal Ashby's

THE LAST DETAIL Cert. X

commencing at 8.00 pm

WHAT THE CRITICS SAID:

< The Last Detail, written, with a generous quota of four-letter words, by Robert Towne (from the novel by Darryl Ponicsan), and strikingly directed by Hal Ashby, was a gritty comedy that took a long and lingering look at life in the military and didn't like what it saw. It starred Jack Nicholson (left) as a 20-year navy man who, together with sailor Otis Young (right), is detailed to escort 18 year-old Randy Quaid (centre) from their base in West Virginia to a Massachusetts prison. Quaid's offence was stealing the proceeds of a polio charity-box for which he received the unreasonable sentence of eight years in the brig. The brunt of the screenplay rested squarely with Nicholson who, in the course of the week-long journey, is determined, come what may, to show his unfortunate young prisoner a good time. With no last-minute reprieve for Quaid (who at least gets to lose his virginity), the film ended on a sad and sombre note, qualities echoed in Ashby's direction, in the bleached look of Michael Chapman's photography, and in Nicholson's angry, compassionate and humorous central performance. As for Quaid, without betraying a trace of self-pity or sentimentality, he always managed to make palpable the pain he was feeling. There were fine performances from Clifton James as the chief Master-at-Arms, Luana Anders, Carol Kane (as a prostitute), and Michael Moriarty. The producer was Gerald Ayres. (103 mins)

COMING NEXT MONTH



Performance Ends 10.15pm (approx.)

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