

## Review of *Devised and Directed* by Mike Leigh

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### Abstract

*Devised and Directed* by Mike Leigh is a compilation of sixteen articles that are clubbed into four themes. The book gives a candid review of Leigh's creative work. This book is written in an effective style, which develops reader's interest and motivates them to watch some of his remarkable films to know more about his story telling and film making techniques.

**Keywords:** British film, psychology, film



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Review of Bryan Cardinale – Powell and Marc DiPaolo, Devised and Directed by Mike Leigh, Bloomsbury – New York, London, New Delhi and Sydney, 2013, ISBN: HB: 978-1-6235-6599-2

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Author, Director Mike Leigh is a great observer; he has extra ordinary talent in observing things and capacity to convert and narrate those observations in the form of story and then depict them in a melodrama for big screen. “Devised and Directed by Mike Leigh” is a compilation of sixteen articles that are clubbed into four themes. The book gives a candid review of Leigh’s creative work. This book is written in an effective style, which develops reader’s interest and motivates them to watch some of his remarkable films to know more about his story telling and film making techniques.

The first section of book “Devising Leigh” is a collection of four articles, written by Christopher Meir, Robert Marchand, Andrew Crowther, Brenda Wentworth, Christopher Jorden, Sharon E. Cogdill and Bryan Cardinale-Powell. This section highlights about different well-known producer’s interest in marks film, his association with some of the leading producers and marketing strategy, which he adopted for the promotion of his films. This chapter also sheds light on CBI (Character Based Improvisation) process, which Mark used in his films, Marks association with British drama and its depiction in *Topsy – Turvy*, importance of stylization and costume selection in Mike’s films namely *Vera Drake*, *Happy-Go-Lucky*, *All or Nothing*, *Secret & Lies* and *Naked*. In the last chapter, Bryan Cardinale-Powell analyzed *Vera Drake* in detail in the context of films subject, which highlights a very sensitive issue of

abortion, social taboos in British society, its political relevance and time which was selected for the projection of the film.

Second section “Its an Ordinary Life” includes three chapters written by Leonard Quart, Sarah Godfrey and William Verrone. They analyzed some of the outstanding and remarkable movies made by Mike such as *Home Sweet Home*, *Grown-Ups*, *Happy-Go-Lucky*, *Naked* and *All or Nothing*. This section majorly highlights the simplicity and realism of Mark Leigh’s films. Mark is brilliant in deep and rational observation of things; his films show the vulnerability yet firmness of the characters, which lives in different and diverse socio-cultural and economic conditions. This section explores the struggle of British middle class and amalgamation of things, which happen around us. This section of book reveals different elements of filmmaking.

Third Section “Beyond Verisimilitude” clubs three chapters of Stella Hockenhull, Frances Pheasant Kelly and Bryan Cardinale-Powell. It is an analysis of Mike’s movies *Vera Drake*, *Another Year*, *Secret & Lies* and *All or Nothing*. All these four movies focus on the narratives forms and choice of content in Mike’s films. Frances Pheasant Kelly analyzed *Secret & Lies* in the light of different spaces used in Mike’s film and how it support in the smooth movement of the story. While analyzing, *Vera Drake* and *Another Year* author tried to focus on Mike’s selection of characters in his movies and the art of depicting hard truths in a very interesting and emotional manner.

Fourth Section “Leigh Versus the Tories” is collection of chapters in which authors analyzed Mike’s movies very deeply and relate them with different aspects and realities of British society. In the Grotesque State of the Nation, the author has mostly written about Mike’s two films *Vera Drake* and *High Hopes*. He analyzed the story and characters in reference to the

political situation of the country. Another chapter written in this section analyses his film *Meantime* and the lead character of the story, which highlights socio- economic and psychological problems and complexes of slow learners. Last chapter of the book “I Spy: Mike Leigh in the age of Britpop”, is written by David Sweeney, it meticulously analyzes and explains about mike’s work during Britpop era of 1990 and highlights his five six films *Abigail’s party, Meantime, Naked, Life is Sweet* and *Nuts in May*. In this chapter, author’s main contention is to highlight mikes interest in Music and his understanding and projection of popular youth culture.

This book deserves praise for in depth analysis of mike’s work, which was created in different years, which also highlights different social problems and realities. It displays the strength and weakness of human nature and behavior and the struggle between the two. The *Devised and Directed by Mike Leigh* is a must read for people seeking to understand the technicalities related in filmmaking. It will be very helpful to researchers, academicians, practitioners and lay readers to understand the art of story telling, film direction and studies.