Leigh discusses the seemingly counterintuitive process of making a period film more contemporarily relevant by fully embracing the past.

As we were about to settle into our conversation, I told British writer-director Mike Leigh that this wasn’t the first time I had sat down in his presence to hear him answer questions about his work. About five years ago, he spoke to a student program I attended at the Telluride Film Festival on the occasion of Mr. Turner’s U.S. premiere. Before I could even finish my sentence, Leigh let me know that he didn’t plan to participate in such student symposiums again since “it’s always for half an hour, and you should schedule at least two hours or an hour and a half, because you can’t say anything until now.”

Mike Leigh has been something of a film festival darling. In 1993, the British filmmaker won the Best Director award at Cannes for his black tragicomedy Naked. His next film, 1996’s Secrets & Lies, earned him the festival’s even more illustrious Palme d’Or, and the following year, he was chosen to be on the jury. In 1999, his Gilbert & Sullivan drama Topsy-Turvy was given the coveted centrepiece position at the New York Film Festival, and in 2012, he was the president of the Berlin International Film Festival jury.

At its heart, says Leigh, the film explores the concept of truth. “All these people showed up in good faith,” he explains, “with a clear, honest, legitimate aspiration for their rights. That is in the spirit of truthfulness.

Set in Mike Leigh’s “favourite café” in Soho, London, the writer Will Self has a candid conversation with Leigh about his career as writer/director. The conversation explores his influences and thoughts, focusing on Leigh’s later film work rather than his early BBC material. Written by Nerdgasm86.

Plot Keywords: retrospective | cafe | london england | interview | british | See All (5) »
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