



MIKE LEIGH

Another Year

Mike Leigh and Lesley Manville on 'Another Year'

Few people get to make so many films together. Has that process of working together changed at all over the years?

Lesley Manville: I don't think it has really very much. There's more time now... But it's true that whatever time you have, you do it.

Mike Leigh: One of the times we worked together, an actor had been dreadful as the social worker in *Secrets & Lies* [1996], to such an extent that it was embarrassing even to look at the rushes... So I thought, 'Who could do it? We'll get a woman so it doesn't embarrass him.' And Lesley could do it, and she was the perfect person to play a social worker... We then did a potted process.

LM: Yes, it was different because we knew it had to be a social worker, and the scene had to be about a woman finding her birth mother, so it was this hybrid situation, really. But nevertheless, creating a character and all of that was the same.

ML: On *Topsy-Turvy* [1999] you famously did a massive amount of research. You were looking into dentistry – I don't know what it had to do with Gilbert and Sullivan! That kind of research has no parallel if you're doing contemporary things. But on *Another Year*, although you did a tiny amount of research into what Mary would do, you spent a huge amount of time maturing a condition and accumulating her layers of mostly bad experience.

LM: You do feel that you could go on ad infinitum. Of course, there does come a point where you have to stop and start shooting. But actually that stuff I was getting together with Mary about absorbing the condition, you could have just gone on and on and on.

ML: From my point of view, God forbid it should ever go on and on and on! It's about making a film. The great confusion that arises [when people discuss my work] is that it's about the process that precedes the film. Of course, every building has its foundations, and the so-called process, which varies considerably in its application, is fantastically important. But what matters is what we do when we go out and make the film.

If the character is someone like Mary, who we may all have met at dinner parties – as opposed say to a Victorian woman like Kitty Gilbert, who you played in Topsy-Turvy – does that make the process shorter?

LM: As I get older, I'm playing older characters. Twenty years ago it was quicker, because you kind of get to 30 and that's it. Where you're creating Tom and Gerri and Mary's lives – and Mary has been in their lives for 20 years – you get to 30 and you've still got another 20 years to develop.

ML: What you said a moment ago could be construed as sounding as though the length of time taken is based on the needs of the character, but of course the length of time to do it is the length of time there is, and in the end everything is worked out in a pragmatic way.

But the character isn't really defined until we get to the bit that nobody talks about, but which is the most important bit – which is where we convert that

raw material into very precise stuff. The only moment where the character really lives and exists is when the camera is turned on, and when you hit those precise, distilled, fundamental and essential moments. So it's an ongoing process. Although in principle you create the character and she exists and then you film.

I'm interested in the dynamic in Another Year between the ostensibly happy couple – Tom and Gerri – and the very lonely individual, Mary. The film gives a sense of all the different aspects of something as complicated as that.

LM: With someone like Mary, we talked about and explored various areas of her loneliness and how she copes with it, but it was only as the film went on that you could see the loneliness in her over-chirpiness and her drunkenness.

ML: But also I don't know how you could put into a conventional script the sum total of Mary, because what you see is not only her condition now – you also get that she's been abused and exploited and had good and bad relationships with guys. You can see her in those situations through the layers of her behaviour.

In one of your interviews you mention that you used to say that other people could make films in this way if they wanted to, but now you're saying nobody else could arrive at the point you're at.

ML: I've met young actors who've said, 'We did your process at drama school.' I don't know what that process is. There are certain procedures, but Lesley, you tell me if it's been exactly the same every time we've done it?

LM: No, not in detail. Over the years it's changed because you've got better as a filmmaker, and we've got better as actors.

I assume you must have reached some kind of shorthand form of communication.

LM: When we first met I had never been close to that type of work, and hadn't thought about the kind of actress I wanted to be. So we weren't a natural pairing. But then when we did work together it became apparent to both of us very quickly that there was something about us that was good together.

I had no notion of playing anybody who was not me. We started to create a character who was so unlike me. And I just loved improvising. The whole thing about creating a character from scratch seemed to make perfect sense to me. In many ways we're quite similar – we're quite thorough people.

ML: When it comes to the precision of scripting, Lesley is impeccable. I can give a note about a shift in nuance, and Lesley can get it. So that's why you get this modulation in Mary.

Interview by Nick James, *Sight & Sound*, November 2010

ANOTHER YEAR

Directed by: Mike Leigh
©: Untitled 09 Limited, UK Film Council,
Channel Four Television Corporation
Production Company: Thin Man Films
a Simon Channing Williams production
For: Film4
Produced by: Untitled 09 Limited
Presented by: Focus Features International, UK Film Council
Made with the support of: The UK Film Council's Premiere Fund
International Sales and Distribution by: Focus Features International
Executive Producers: Gail Egan, Tessa Ross
Developed by: Film4
Producer: Georgina Lowe
Line Producer: Danielle Brandon
Developed with the support of: Nicholas Marple, Sophie Roberts
For Focus Features: International President, Sales and Distribution:
Alison Thompson; *International Executive Vice President, Marketing*
and Distribution: Heta Paarte; *International Director, Delivery and*
Post-production: Jerry Melichar
For Film4: Head of Business Affairs: Paul Grindey; *Head of Production:*
Tracey Josephs; *Head of Commercial Development:* Sue Bruce-Smith
For UK Film Council: Head of Premiere Fund: Sally Caplan; *Head of*
Business Affairs: Will Evans; *Head of Production Finance:* Vincent Holden;
Head of Physical Production: Fiona Morham; *Diversity Scheme*
Executive: Steve Morley
Production Manager: Sarah McBryde
Production Accountant: Will Tyler
Unit Manager: Iain Smith
Location Manager: Henry Woolley
Post-production Supervisor: Polly Duval
1st Assistant Director: Josh Robertson
2nd Assistant Directors: Toby Hosking, Melanie Heseltine
Script Supervisor: Heather Storr
Casting: Nina Gold
Written by: Mike Leigh
Cinematography: Dick Pope
Camera Operator: Dick Pope
Gaffer: Andy Long
Stills Photographer: Simon Mein
Special Effects: Derek Langley Special Effects,
Snow Business International
Film Editor: Jon Gregory
Production Designer: Simon Beresford
Art Director: Andrew Rothschild
Set Decorator: Sophia Chowdhury
Graphic Artist: Rowanna Lacey

Property Master: Steve Wheeler
Costume Designer: Jacqueline Durran
Make-up & Hair Designer: Christine Blundell
Senior Make-up Stylist: Lesa Warrener
Make-up & Hair Artist: Chloë Meddings
Title Design: Chris Allies
Originated on: Fuji Film
Rushes and Prints by: DeLuxe Laboratories
Music Composer: Gary Yershon
Music Conducted by: Terry Davies
Musicians' Contractor: Isobel Griffiths
Sound Recordist: Tim Fraser
Boom Operators: Loveday Harding, Will Towers
Re-recording Mixers: Andy Thompson, Mark Paterson, Nigel Stone
Supervising Sound Editor: Nigel Stone
Publicity: Premier PR, Jonathan Rutter
EPK: Special Treats
Digital Intermediate by: Pepper Post
In Loving Memory: Simon Channing Williams

Cast

Jim Broadbent (*Tom*)
Lesley Manville (*Mary*)
Ruth Sheen (*Gerri*)
Oliver Maltman (*Joe*)
Peter Wight (*Ken*)
David Bradley (*Ronnie*)
Martin Savage (*Carl*)
Karina Fernandez (*Katie*)
Michele Austin (*Tanya*)
Phil Davis (*Jack*)
Imelda Staunton (*Janet*)
Stuart McQuarrie (*Tom's colleague*)
Eileen Davies (*mourner*)
Mary Jo Randle (*mourner*)
Ben Roberts (*mourner*)
David Hobbs (*vicar*)
Badi Uzzaman (*Mr Gupta*)
Meneka Das (*Mr Gupta's friend*)
Ralph Ineson (*drill worker*)
Edna Doré (*allotment lady*)
Gary Powell (*man in bar*)
Lisa McDonald (*girl in bar*)

UK 2010©
130 mins

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