

THE BADLANDS COLLECTIVE
PRESENTS



TOPSY-TURVY



A 35MM SCREENING
GENESIS CINEMA, 21 JANUARY 2015
WITH SPECIAL GUEST MIKE LEIGH

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PRESENTS
TOPSY-TURVY



1999 / UK-USA / 159 MINS / RELEASED BY PATHÉ

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY MIKE LEIGH / PRODUCED BY SIMON CHANNING WILLIAMS
PHOTOGRAPHED BY DICK POPE / EDITED BY ROBIN SALES / COSTUMES BY LINDY HEMMING
PRODUCTION DESIGNED BY EVE STEWART / ART DIRECTION BY HELEN SCOTT

STARRING JIM BROADBENT AS W.S. GILBERT / ALAN CORDUNER AS ARTHUR SULLIVAN
TIMOTHY SPALL AS RICHARD TEMPLE / SHIRLEY HENDERSON AS LENORA BRAHAM
LESLEY MANVILLE AS LUCY GILBERT / MARTIN SAVAGE AS GEORGE GROSSMITH

When *Topsy-Turvy* was released in 1999, it was regarded as a surprising change of direction for Mike Leigh. The director's career to that point had been distinguished by his ability to make a virtue of the ordinary; finding comedy and tragedy in the experiences of unremarkable working-class lives, and turning unprepossessing characters into compelling protagonists. *Topsy-Turvy* was Leigh's first period film and his first film based on real people and events, and far from being a tale of ordinary folk, this was to be a portrait of W.S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan as they developed their production of *The Mikado*.

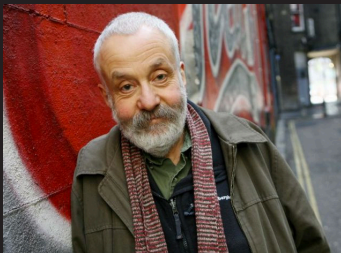
However, while *Topsy-Turvy* may appear anomalous on a surface level, in many respects it remains very recognisably a Mike Leigh film. Despite dealing with characters of a more elevated status and following historical events closely, Leigh's interests remain unchanged. He wants to explore the complexities of human relationships, individual hopes and fears, the difference between public faces and private lives, and to ultimately create a sense of a universe that continues beyond the scope of the film. What's truly remarkable about *Topsy-Turvy* is not just the scale of the production and the skill of the actors, but the amount of detail and emotional texture that Leigh manages to weave into the film.

At its core, this is the Gilbert and Sullivan story (Jim Broadbent and Allan Cordoner, leading one of the great screen ensembles), with the film introducing them as a partnership in crisis, creatively stagnant, before inspiration strikes and *The Mikado* begins to form. But beyond that, Leigh and his team craft a wide-ranging portrait of the whole company. We are invited into dressing rooms to spend time with neurotic actors, who are often found gossiping, worrying about their parts or seeking a narcotic answer to their troubles. We see theatrical impresario Richard D'Oyly Carte and his wife and business manager Helen Lenoir attempt to balance the books and keep the Gilbert and Sullivan

operation running smoothly. We join rehearsals as the cast gradually gets to grips with this strange new musical. With Leigh's method of devising a film famously involving lengthy improvisation sessions with his cast, and his parallel career in the stage, it's perhaps unsurprising that he would give such a fascinating and authentic screen depiction of the hard work and collaboration that is required in creating a piece of theatre. This is clearly a subject that Leigh is enraptured by, and his study of how exactly a Victorian-era theatre operated – from the mechanics of stagecraft and makeup to audience etiquette – is constantly transporting and illuminating.

There are clear parallels to be drawn between *Topsy-Turvy* and Leigh's most recent film *Mr. Turner*, with both being portraits of 19th century artists, but what really distinguishes these films (and Leigh's 1950s drama *Vera Drake*) is the evocation of the environment that surrounds the characters, which is as rich as the characterisations themselves. The work done in *Topsy-Turvy* by production designer Eve Stewart, costume designer Lindy Hemming, art director Helen Scott and cinematographer Dick Pope to recreate Victorian London interiors stands as a considerable achievement, and Leigh takes every opportunity to immerse us in the everyday experiences of his characters. All the language and behaviour in Leigh's period films is accurately observed and all interactions are informed by character, class, history and custom, but he avoids the fussy, studied air that afflicts some films set in the past. The combination of rigorous research and Leigh's detailed approach to character instead results in a vision of 19th century life that feels like it has genuinely been lived.

In the wake of *Mr. Turner's* critical and box-office success, now seems the ideal time to revisit *Topsy-Turvy* and to observe the ways it revives the past and makes it feel immediate, and avoids the biopic pitfalls that entrap so many storytellers. *Topsy-Turvy* is a film made with passion, humour, empathy and a vivid artistic vision. We're proud to present it from an original 35mm release print and to welcome Mike Leigh to discuss the film.



SPECIAL GUEST MIKE LEIGH

Born in Salford in 1943, Mike Leigh trained as an actor at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art before stints at art school and then training as a film director at London Film School. He directed various theatrical works in London throughout his 20s before adapting his play *Bleak Moments* into his first feature film in 1971. Since then he has created and overseen an imposing number of stage plays, teleplays and feature films, building a reputation as one of Britain's most famed dramatists - not only for his balance of incision, empathy and absurdity, but for his method of developing screenplays through improvisational workshops with actors. He regularly teaches in his capacity as chairman of London Film School and his industry recognition includes five Oscar nominations and three BAFTA awards.

FILMOGRAPHY AS DIRECTOR: *Bleak Moments* (1971), *A Mug's Game?* (TV documentary, 1973), *The Permissive Society* (teleplay, 1975), *The Birth of the Goalie of the 2001 F.A. Cup Final* (TV short, 1975), *Old Chums* (TV short, 1975), *Probation* (TV short, 1975), *A Light Snack* (TV short, 1975), *Afternoon* (TV short, 1975), *Knock for Knock* (teleplay, 1976), *Nuts in May* (TV film, 1976), *The Kiss of Death* (TV film, 1977), *Abigail's Party* (TV film, 1977), *Who's Who* (TV film, 1979), *Grown-Ups* (TV film, 1980), *Home Sweet Home* (TV film, 1982), *Meantime* (TV film, 1984), *Four Days in July* (TV film, 1984), *High Hopes* (1988), *The Short & Curlies* (TV short, 1988), *Life Is Sweet* (1990), *A Sense of History* (TV short, 1992), *Naked* (1993), *Secrets & Lies* (1996), *Career Girls* (1997), *Topsy-Turvy* (1999), *All or Nothing* (2002), *Vera Drake* (2004), *Happy-Go-Lucky* (2008), *Another Year* (2010), *A Running Jump* (short, 2012), *Mr. Turner* (2014)

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