

SECRETS AND LIES REVIEW

Moment after moment, scene after scene, "Secrets & Lies" unfolds with the fascination of eavesdropping. We are waiting to see what these.

That would be wrong because it sidesteps the real subject of the film, which is that the mother and her family have been all but destroyed by secrets and lies. Cynthia hangs up. After being warned by public officials about the troubles she could face by tracking her birth mother down, she continues her investigation and is baffled to learn that her birth mother is white; she does not resent this fact and wants to know more about her mother's past. Also present at the party are Maurice's assistant Jane and Roxanne's boyfriend Paul. He attempts to convince her to speak to her mother. This is also, in an oblique way, the first Mike Leigh film that's partly about film-making. She and Cynthia have never liked one another: Monica sees Cynthia as overly hysterical, while Cynthia suspects Monica of trying to turn Maurice against her. The only person here who's relatively clear-sighted is, appropriately enough, an optometrist - Hortense Marianne Jean-Baptiste, a young black woman who, now that her adoptive parents are dead, sets out to trace her biological mother. The Guardian Collecting his Palme d'Or in Cannes, Mike Leigh hoped that his success would help people who wanted to make films about 'real life - love and passion and caring and all the things that matter'. Cynthia apologises to her profusely and explains matters: she got pregnant at fifteen and her father sent her away due to feeling shame over her pregnancy; after the adoption she never expected Hortense to seek her out. After a while things have calmed down and Hortense is free to visit Cynthia and Roxanne at their home. Let's hope Hollywood doesn't get hold of that recipe - it sounds like the cue for a thousand remakes of Terms Of Endearment. Leigh doesn't opt for the glib worlds-in-collision racial drama that Lawrence Kasdan gave us in Grand Canyon. Roxanne dismisses this claim and states that she has had too much to drink. They walk an extraordinary tight-rope - they're self-evidently tour de force performances, and yet you believe in them as real people. To her surprise, she turns out to be white - factory worker Cynthia Brenda Blethyn, a trembling wreck whose life has collapsed in a wash of drink and disappointment. Cynthia makes passive-aggressive remarks in passing about the seemingly high expenses of decorating a large house instead of concentrating on giving Maurice a child. Cynthia relays this information to Hortense, who replies that, despite the likelihood of her feeling somewhat awkward, agrees to attend and pose as a colleague from work. There are three wonderful walk-on parts - Emma Amos as a scarred beauty, Ron Cook as an embittered photographer, and Lesley Manville's harassed social worker, believable down to the last nervy flick of her hair. Maurice attempts to pacify the situation by confronting Roxanne at a nearby bus stop.