

Run with the crowd, stand alone, you decide.

A FILM BY SHANE MEADOWS

This is England

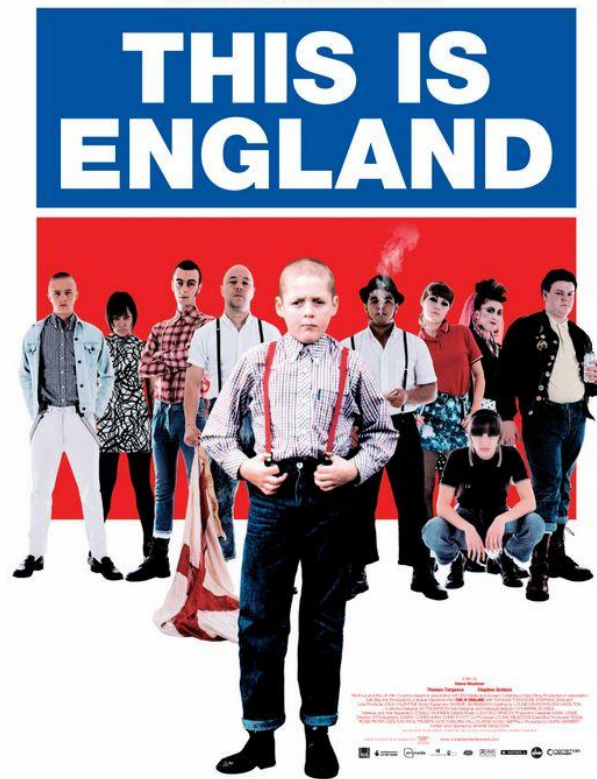
Cert 18

100 mins

UK cinematic release 27th April 2007

Cast:

Thomas Turgoose	Shaun
Stephen Graham	Combo
Jo Hartley	Cynth
Andrew Shim	Milky
Vicky McClure	Lol
Joseph Gilgun	Woody
Rosamund Hanson	Smell
Andrew Ellis	Gadget
Perry Benson	Meggy
George Newton	Banjo
Frank Harper	Lenny
Jack O'Connell	Pukey Nicholls
Kriss Dosanjh	Mr. Sandhu
Kieran Hardcastle	Kes
Chanel Cresswell	Kelly



One reviewer commented:

"As has been widely publicised the movie deals with many controversial and provocative themes. With racism and the involvement of The National Front at it's core it makes for uncomfortable viewing, indeed a handful of people left the cinema midway through such scenes. This however should not put one off seeing the movie, such is the mature way in which the various matters are dealt with by the steady hands of director Shane Meadows."

Stephen Graham, who plays Combo, was asked how he felt about the film receiving an 18 certificate?

"I think it's a real shame because while we were doing the film there was an incident in Liverpool where there were two black lads [Anthony Walker and Marcus Binns], one with his cousin and his girlfriend, who was a white girl, just standing at the bus stop waiting to go home, and two white lads walked past and started giving him abuse and stuff, and they followed him into a park and killed him with an axe. Just put the axe in his head and killed him stone dead. I don't want to sound all self-important and say it would have changed that, but, you know, maybe if they'd watched the film it might have had just a little bit of an impact where they could have seen that violence happen. Maybe one of them would have just hesitated after seeing that violence acted out."

"I think it's ridiculous that some of the cast aren't old enough to see it. These people who are classifying films, are they telling me that kids don't swear nowadays? It's a part of everyday language."

The director had his own thoughts on the certification process for his award winning film:

"It's like I've somehow overachieved. By having one piece of violence and one piece of really acute verbal violence I've managed to get an 18 certificate, whereas someone else can slay thousands of people in a single film and that's OK. To be honest I don't understand it because, yes, the film is affecting but I think it's something that someone of 15 can cope with. It's not like it's a film about the 80s that has no value; it's incredibly relevant politically. It's as much about Iraq as it is about the Falklands. It's as much as about England in 2007 as it is about England in 1983."

[Bristol City Council was the first Council to use their legal powers to reclassify the film as a certificate 15 within their area.]

Councillor Ron Stone stated: "It was a unanimous decision of the committee that there was nothing we saw in the film which was any worse than you would see probably on Channel 4 or one of the main TV channels at peak-time viewing. We felt it was idiotic that what is basically a very good film and very well made, on a difficult but social issue, should be prevented from being seen by the audience it was targeted at. I think the censors actually are wrong in giving it an 18 certificate."

The London Boroughs of Camden and Westminster, amongst others, subsequently also overturned the classification in their areas.]



taking the piss out of your trousers, and you see this charismatic group of guys in smart Ben Shermans walking down the street, you want to be like them.”

Shane Meadows was born in Uttoxeter, Staffordshire on 26th December 1972, and judging from the following extract from his own website, a career as a film maker did not seem a likely route!

“After dropping out of school before reaching his O-Levels, Shane Meadows originally set out to become an infamous, criminal mastermind of legendary proportions. Things didn't go to plan however.

After being caught buying a stolen set of limited edition John Lowe darts, and later admitting to stealing and eating an egg-custard tart from the local Sainsbury's, it was clear that he just wasn't cut out for the hardened criminal underworld. The final straw came when criminal charges against him were read out in court and laughter could be heard from the gallery and the judge's bench. The charge was for theft of a breast pump from Boots the chemist. It was after this humiliation that Shane put his breast pump pilfering days behind him and began to put his energy into film-making.”

He has put the East Midlands on the cinematic map, having made five features and numerous shorts in and around that area since the mid-90s.

In an interview with the BBC he detailed the difficulties they had encountered in finding a location that still looked like the 1980's. Meadows stated that they found many areas in the Midlands had been refurbished or where most houses in roads now had a satellite dish. However they found the St Ann's estate in Nottingham had seen little improvement work.



Meadows recalled that one aspect that of the production that caused financial difficulties was renting period cars from the 60's through to late 70's (few families would have owned a 1980's car), with the production being quoted up to £200 per day per car. Their solution turned out to go onto the internet and buy Datsuns, Allegros, Capris etc for around £250 each, get them road worthy with the cast and crew then using them to drive to and from the set, as well as in the film. The production ended up employing a team of people buying bangers from their required era on Ebay, having them fixed up, deployed for a few days filming and then sold at a profit back on Ebay! It cost no more than £100 per car for the whole shoot. At the end of the production everyone had the pick of what they wanted – Meadows recalled that his choice was a “Kermit the Frog green Vauxhall Chevette – very nice”!

When asked “**What was it like working with Shane Meadows?**” Stephen Graham replied: “Absolutely amazing. I'd seen everything Shane's ever done, and it's the reason I wanted to become an actor in the first place. Everything's improvised. You'll have a set structure, and for a week before filming we did intense workshops where you develop a whole background history for your character.”

Is it true that a lot of the script was improvised?

"All of it was but Shane shoots chronologically. You go in a linear journey but anything can happen. It means you're constantly on your toes. We'd sometimes shoot for 10 minutes but then Shane spends a year in the editing suite and the script is created I suppose."

How exhilarating is that as an actor?

"Unbelievably so. It's my dream as an actor to work like that. In fact, it's every actor's dream to let loose, create havoc and let go. It's controlled improv, though, like Ken Loach. But it's such a joy to do. Shane's a lovely fella and a brilliant director. Working with him was everything I hoped it would be and more. He has a wicked sense of humour."

Do you agree with the people who say he's the next Mike Leigh or Ken Loach?

"I'd agree a million per cent. I believe Ken Loach works a very similar way with his actors."

However Meadows' idol is Scorsese, although he has no love of Hollywood. He makes occasional commercials but still lives in Burton-on-Trent. In fact, there is a puritanical streak to Meadows, who hates filming sex scenes: 'Emotionally, I'll send someone to hell, but when it comes to a girl taking her clothes off, I really struggle

Like Scorsese, Meadows has a love-hate relationship with violence: 'The one thing I abhor is someone using their physical advantage to abuse somebody.' Filming the scene in This Is England where Milky, a West Indian skinhead, is beaten up reduced Meadows to tears.

What really marked out Meadows was his ability to coax astonishing performances from non-actors. Thomas 'Tommo' Turgoose, who plays the lead, Shaun, was first spotted in a Grimsby games arcade. 'He was the only one who asked for a fiver for the audition and we said, "That's our boy,"' laughs Meadows, who saw a lot of himself in Tommo. 'He was really ballsy and, like me, a lot smaller than his friends. He had that survival instinct.'



Previously excluded from school and diagnosed with ADD, Turgoose is remarkable; and his acting has been described as the most charismatic British child performance since David Bradley in Kes. The film is dedicated to Turgoose's mother, Sharon, who died of cancer on 29 December 2005; she never got to see the film, although she saw a short preview. This event prompted Meadows and two of the film's actors, Andrew Shim and Stephen Graham, to make a gentlemen's agreement that they would always be there for him. 'Tommo is now 15 and he is auditioning for other acting roles,' says Meadows with pride.

This is Shane Meadows' most mature and fully realised film. Handling the complexities of masculinity, violence and race with sensitivity and a lightness of touch, it's hard to imagine a film that would better capture the mood of the time, or that could have any greater an understanding of the allure of being part of a gang.

Iain McGlashan

Shane Meadows' latest project is a £6m TV ad campaign on climate change for the government. The TV ad campaign features a father confronted by an enormous energy bill who tries to get his family to switch off lights and appliances, reducing bills and cutting CO2 emissions as a result. The campaign, part of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs "Act on CO2" initiative, follows the launch of a £1bn government scheme to help consumers cut heating bills.

"Apart from the fact that I really liked this campaign because it's funny and well written, I was also interested in making some films that might make a difference to the way people behave," said Meadows. "I've no doubt about how serious the whole climate change issue is and no one can afford any longer to sit around and pretend it's not happening".