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film

**What's the name and where do they come from?**

Alan Clarke, born in 1935. Liverpool.

**And how would one pronounce that, then?**

With plenty of menace, and preferably with a couple of snooker balls in a sock to use as back-up if things get messy.

Alan Clarke was probably responsible for the trend in the last fifteen years for gritty British dramas. He was certainly responsible for the launch of several stellar careers, notably Tim Roth and Gary Oldman, both of whom cite him as a major influence and guiding force for their own directorial ventures. Clarke's bleak outlook reflected the changes in society in a time of uncertainty, with job losses and the Cold War looming.

**What key films of theirs can I casually drop into conversation?**

Clarke's most famous film is 'Scum', set in a Borstal - now revamped as Young Offenders' Institutions - which is on the verge of being over-run by its inmates. The film concentrates on the ringleaders and features Ray Winstone as Carlin, the 'Daddy', presiding over the ritual beatings and attacks, as well as Phil Daniels, fresh from on-screen trysts with Leslie Ash in 'Quadrophenia'. Clarke's best work, though, is 'Made in Britain', centering on Tim Roth in his screen debu, as Trevor - a violent, out of control young man, bent on racism, crime and hate. The film shows him as a human being, at a time when the establishment were trying to blame the young for everything.

**Any awards or other notable information?**

Although almost all of his work made it to video, most of his output was for television, so Clarke was not nominated for any major awards, but he was responsible for launching the careers of Jane Horrocks, and the aforementioned Ray Winstone, Phil Daniels, Gary Oldman and Tim Roth.

**And is he still alive?**

He died in 1990 aged just 54, still in his directorial prime. His last two films were 'Elephant', an unblinking look at killings in Northern Ireland, shot almost through the gun-barrels, and 'The Firm', pre-dating Tom Cruise and John Grisham by a few years, and taking a swipe at football hooliganism, with a pre-Hollywood Gary Oldman in a powerful lead role as the chief hooligan.

**Where can I find out more?**

Alan Clarke - A Retrospective



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