Leachman, Cloris (1926-) Encyclopedia Article

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Leachman, Cloris (1926—)

An exceptionally good and versatile actress, angular and wistful-looking, Cloris Leachman made a striking film debut in *Kiss Me Deadly* (1955). In between raising five children, she frequently appeared in secondary roles thereafter, but her identity remained vague until 1971. It was her poignant, exquisitely judged Oscar-winning performance as the lonely and neglected wife in *The Last Picture Show* (1971) that brought her due recognition and led her to two treasurable performances for Mel Brooks—the terrifying Frau Blucher in *Young Frankenstein* (1974) and the deliciously violent nurse in *High Anxiety* (1977). Leachman joined the acting profession by way of the 1946 Miss America Pageant, in which she was runner-up. Having studied drama at Northwestern University, she worked regularly on Broadway and in live television drama. Her TV career grew substantially from the mid-1970s, bringing her a clutch of Emmy Awards and her own show, *Phyllis* (1975-77), a spin-off series based on the supporting character she had played in *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* from 1970-1975.

Further Reading:

Katz, Ephraim. *The International Film Encyclopedia.* New York, Harper Collins, 1994.

Willsmer, Trevor. "Cloris Leachman." *Who's Who in Hollywood.* Edited by Robyn Karney. New York, Continuum, 1994.