



FILM: **CODA**

FDG RATING: 4.3 ☺☺☺☺○

Film Discussion Group (FDG) Scale is 1-5 (5 is best)

Sian Heder: *director/writer*
Emilia Jones: *actress, Ruby Rossi*
Marlee Matlin: *actress, Jackie Rossi*
Troy Kotsur: *actor, Frank Rossi*
Daniel Durant: *actor, Leo Rossi*

DATE: September 19, 2021

DISCUSSION SUMMARY: **CODA**

We first meet Ruby in the wee hours of the morning as she is belting out a song on the family fishing boat in the chilly waters of Gloucester, Massachusetts, but, of course, her dad and older brother are oblivious as they busily haul the fishing lines and squirming fish into the boat. Ruby's parents and brother, Leo, are deaf. The family depends on each day's catch for their livelihood, so they rely on Ruby to be their conduit to the hearing community. (CODA is the acronym for children of deaf adults). At 17, she works early mornings to help her parents and brother keep their fishing business afloat and then hurries to school in time for the first class.

The story is about her conflict between leaving her family to pursue her dream of singing or continuing to be the person her family depends on for so many communication aspects of their fishing business. It's a familiar theme, a pivotal point in a young person's life when establishing independence from parental control/decisions is crucial on their journey to adulthood. But in Ruby's case, her role in the family is vital.

CODA tells the story from the unique perspective of the deaf community and infuses the story with so much warmth and humor that it is a joy on many levels. The outstanding performances by the ensemble cast won several awards during the film festival circuit. Not to mention Ruby's parents are a kick to watch. Marlee Matland plays Ruby's mom and Troy Kotsur is unforgettable as Ruby's dad. The parents are humorous and loving, providing many of the film's laughs and smiles. Daniel Durant plays the older brother role perfectly, and Emilia Jones is endearing, funny, and talented, carrying the film using her own singing voice. Eugenio González Derbez as the choir teacher is arguably the most captivating of all the characters, and getting Oscar buzz for his performance. He's the kind of teacher every young person should have. He balances stern expectations with inspiring challenges, makes learning fun, and is committed heart and soul to his students.

It's important to note that Ruby's mom, dad, and brother are played by deaf actors. Emilia and the director learned ASL in preparation for the film. As one resident critic noted, the film really shed a light on issues that are challenging to the deaf community. The scenes on the fishing boat and in the fishing community, also showed us a way of life that most of us are not familiar with.

One discussion participant expected the film to be sappy but because Ruby had a good head on her shoulders, she made the film feel real. And also because the parents were so unpredictable and funny. Another discussion participant said the film was a bit sappy but still it was good, adding that although the story was predictable, the acting was excellent and the film was extremely well made. Others dismissed any sappy attribute, saying they absolutely loved the film.

It was definitely a "feel good" movie with beautiful cinematography, and of course, some of our favorite songs. And lots of favorite scenes such as when Ruby's girlfriend, Gertie, flirts with Leo and asks Ruby to translate a flirtatious message to him. Ruby purposely mistranslates. When Ruby performs her duet in front of a full audience in the school's auditorium, her mom and dad, who don't understand what is the big deal about singing, start looking around them and see the emotion in the audience. They realize their daughter's singing is creating this palpable emotional response.

Another memorable scene is after Ruby's performance, her dad wants to feel what the audience heard so he asks Ruby to sing the song for him as he places a finger on her neck where are vocal chords vibrate. Undoubtedly, the most touching scene is when she is auditioning for Berklee College of Music. Her parents sneak into the back of the auditorium. When Ruby notices them, she begins to sign the lyrics as she sings.

Multilayered, meaningful, and a joy to watch, CODA soared with an exhilarating score of 4.3 on our scale of 1 to 5. (5 is the best.)



See you at the movies!

Adriane Dedic, adedic@pacbell.net

www.filmdiscussiongroup.com