



FILM: **MANCHESTER BY THE SEA**

FDG RATING: 3.1 ☺☺☺○○

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

Kenneth Lonergan: *Director*
Casey Affleck: *Actor: Lee Chandler*
Lucas Hedges: *Actor: Patrick*
Michelle Williams: *Actress: Randi*

DATE: December 11, 2016

DISCUSSION SUMMARY: **MANCHESTER BY THE SEA**

Manchester by the Sea is so well done as a dark story about loneliness, grief, tragedy, death, self blame, regret, and heartbreak, that it raises the question, why should we see it? That is the response many of our resident film critics had. Even as Casey Affleck's performance is being rumored Oscar worthy, as Lee Chandler, the brooding, irritable loner who works as a janitor for an apartment block in Quincy (small town near Boston), to some of us it seemed a one note portrayal and not too much of a stretch from Affleck's own persona. Even the requiem musical scores were heavy handed.

The exploration of relationships was compelling with an exceptional performance by Luca Hedges as Patrick, Lee's teenage nephew. Patrick is extremely believable in his angst at being left to the guardianship of his "loser" uncle Lee after his father's sudden death, and not wanting to leave his high school friends, his band, hockey team, and two girlfriends he is successfully juggling. A brief visit with his mom and her brutally controlling husband, erases any inclination that living with them would be better than with his Uncle Lee who resents that Patrick is being interjected into his routinely depressing existence. Patrick doesn't understand why his Uncle won't leave his meager life in Quincy and move back to their hometown, but Lee's infamous past in Manchester still haunts him

Regret is the main current running through the film. In a flashback we see how Lee's drinking caused the horrific tragedy that destroyed the life he shared with his wife, Randi. He knows he is to blame and Randi loathingly blames him as well. Michelle Williams is being praised for her role as Lee's exwife, but some of us found her clingy, overly emotional character a bit too much in the scene when she wells up with tears as she says she forgives him.

Lee's affection for his brother Joe and nephew, Patrick, is established in the opening scene where grade school-aged Patrick is clowning around with Lee on the deck of Joe's boat. But Lee's boorish, irresponsible personality and resulting tragedy transformed him into an isolated, guilt-ridden, broken man. Out of his loyalty to Joe, Lee hesitantly assumes guardianship of Patrick and together they navigate an unfamiliar parent-teenager relationship. By the end of the film the two create a close bond which might be the only uplifting scene in the story as we appreciate the small but significant progress Lee has made.

Brutal realism is accented by picturesque cinematography of the New England coast with looming gray skies. So, if you are in the mood for bleak reality, Manchester By The Sea, is a strong film with solid acting and heart wrenching story. If you don't want to spend two hours watching misery slowly melt, you would be happier to skip it. With an appreciative 4 outweighed by a should-have-skipped-it 2.5 and some scores in between, Manchester By The Sea mustered a 3.1 on our scale of 1 to 5. (5 is best.)



See you at the movies!

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