



FILM: **SPOTLIGHT**

FDG RATING: 3.78 ☺☺☺☺○
Film Discussion Group (FDG) Scale is 1-5 (5 is best)

Tom McCarthy: *Director*
Michael Keaton: *Actor: Walter Robinson*
Liev Shreiber: *Actor: Marty Baron*
Mark Ruffalo: *Actor: Michael Rezendes*
Rachel McAdams: *Actress: Sacha Pfeiffer*

DATE: January 10, 2016

DISCUSSION SUMMARY: **SPOTLIGHT**

Possibly one of the most meaningful films in 2015, *Spotlight* chronicles the 2001 investigation by a team of journalists at the Boston Globe, of the sexual abuse cover up in the Boston Roman Catholic Church; an investigation that methodically revealed a much broader systemic cover up occurring in cities across America. It's an emotionally powerful film that unpeels painful layers at the pace of tedious, detailed investigative reporting and then throws a knockout punch at the end when the screen scrolls a lengthy list of all the other cities in America and towns around the world where similar abuse has occurred.

The acting was outstanding by an ensemble cast including Michael Keaton as Walter Robinson, the head of the *Spotlight* investigative team; Liev Shreiber as the new Boston Globe editor Marty Baron (a Jewish editor previously at the Miami Herald, the only one without strong family/religious ties to the Boston Catholic church); Rachel McAdams as Sacha Pfeiffer who sympathetically interviews victims to draw out the details, Mark Ruffalo as the zealous reporter Michael Rezendes; and Stanley Tucci as Mitchell Garabedian, the attorney representing survivors of sex abuse. Keaton has a tendency to overact but we agreed he played his role perfectly. We disagreed on Ruffalo, however, with some ardent Ruffalo fans thinking in this role, he went a bit overboard.

Several of our resident reviewers who grew up Catholic could personally relate to the story because of suspicions or creepy feelings they had about certain priests in childhood or as teens. Some later found out that children they personally knew had been abused. Others remembered experiencing horribly mean and degrading treatment by nuns.

Priests using their position of sacred power to take advantage of a child's unwavering trust, perform sexual abuse, and then be protected by the church if the abuse came to light, shatters our entire concept religion. The outrageousness of such acts hit a deep emotional chord in those of us who had ties with the Catholic church. One reviewer thought the film should have gone further into the abuse. Many of us remember hearing about the headline story, but really didn't know the details so seeing the film was very enlightening and made a deep impression.

For such a salacious theme, we appreciated the restraint in the film's approach that took an almost documentary style and focused on the investigative process. It was very interesting to learn how each detail was methodically uncovered and how the team had to restrain themselves, from publishing until they had the complete bigger story, while at the same time, fearing the competition would grab it at any moment. A couple resident reviewers thought the documentary approach was a bit dry.

The *Spotlight* team versus the Boston Archdiocese, the Catholic Boston community, and the Globes 53% catholic subscribers, is a David versus Goliath story. *Spotlight* wins by exposing the years of abuse cover up in several big front page news stories. The impact is resounding. It's an engaging film without the Hollywood hullabaloo of gratuitous sex, violence, and romance. Proof that an important story, told well, with strong acting, directing, and production, makes a powerful, memorable film experience. We awarded *Spotlight* a well earned 3.78 which is practically 4 on a scale of 1 to 5. (5 is the best).



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See you at the movies!

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