



FILM: **THE BANSHEES OF INISHERIN**

FDG RATING: 3.0 😊😊😐👎👎

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

Martin McDonagh: *director/writer*

Colin Farrell: *actor, Padraic*

Brendan Gleeson: *actor Colm*

DATE: January 22, 2023

DISCUSSION SUMMARY: **THE BANSHEES OF INISHERIN**

In life, some friendships last while others don't, but on the remote fictional island of Inisherin, off the coast of Ireland, Pádraic, a small farmer, is devastated and doesn't understand why his buddy Colm suddenly puts an end to their lifelong friendship and daily imbibing at the neighborhood pub. The Banshees of Inisherin is a very black comedy, set in 1923, starring outstanding performances by Colin Farrell as Padriac and Brendan Gleeson as Colm with the consequences of a dissolved friendship at its core. The two are an unlikely pair with significant age and personality differences. Colm is much older, a bit gruff, plays the fiddle, is writing a new tune to play, and says outright that Padraic is just plain dull. Padraic has a reputation for being "nice" and argues that nice things last, like nice paintings. Colm states he wants to be remembered for his music, not for being nice.

Pitting two close friends against each other with the Irish civil war taking place on the mainland, (rifle and canon fire is heard off in the distance) made some discussion participants contend that the story was allegorical. The Irish civil war was Irish nationalists versus Irish nationalists, and was probably pitting friends against each other in many instances. Those relationships abruptly ended for political reasons. It was considered a senseless and tragic chapter in Irish history just as Colm's decision to end his friendship with Padriac seems a bit senseless. As the story continues we witness the macabre effects of their feud, including two deaths and loss of limb, or actually loss of fingers, which could allude to the horrific bodily mutilations that occur in battle.

But several discussion participants adamantly opposed the allegorical link and insisted the film should be taken at face value. One published critic explained that "Pádraic's distress and incomprehension around Colm's rejection allows the film maker, McDonagh, to explore not only the grief experienced when adult friends decouple, but also vicariously the collapse of childhood friendships or family estrangements." Still, when Colm carries out his ultimatum that if Padriac doesn't stop pestering him, he will cut off a finger each time Padriac speaks to him, many of us thought this was unnecessarily grisly, self-mutilation (especially for a fiddle player), and just didn't make sense.

Padriac's sympathetic sister, Sionhan, tries to help by asking Colm why he decided to end the friendship. When Colm emphatically declares, "He's just too dull", Sionhan screams back with one of our favorite lines, "You're all f-ing dull!". In fact, she is well educated, works at the library, and leaves the tiny island of Inisherin when offered a librarian job on the mainland. With two down, Padriac's only companion left is his beloved donkey, Jenny, (a charming performance by an animal) and sadly Jenny dies after choking on one of Colm's severed fingers.

Despite the pitch black meant-to-be-comedic scenes, the location was beautiful. "Atmospheric" was an adjective used by one discussion participant who loved the film. Unpredictable, sharp dialog, superb acting, were some of the positive comments. All of us enjoyed the music and cinematography.

But what about the title? The musical piece that Colm is writing is titled The Banshees of Inisherin. Who are the banshees? In Scottish folklore they are female spirits who foretell death. Old, withered Mrs. McCormick warns of two deaths. One is the donkey, the other is Dominic (outstanding performance by Barry Keoghan), a troubled, clueless, annoying, lad who tries to be a supportive pal to Pádraic. The conflict between Padriac and Colm continues to escalate, becoming more brutal in a tit for tat fashion, (just as the civil war increases in brutality.)

Our votes did not calibrate to the award-winning status the film received at the 2023 Golden Globes (best actor, best picture). Although one critical participant gave it our highest score, others were less enamored. We tentatively befriended The Banshees of Inisherin with a wary 3.0 on our scale of 1 to 5. (5 is the best.)



See you at the movies!

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