



FILM: **THE KILLING OF A SACRED DEER**

FDG RATING: 2.7 ☹️☹️☹️⊖⊖

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

Yorgos Lanthimos: *director*  
Colin Farrell: *actor, Steven Murphy (heart surgeon)*  
Nicole Kidman: *actress, wife of Steven Murphy*  
Barry Keoghan: *actor, Martin*

DATE: July 22, 2018

DISCUSSION SUMMARY: **THE KILLING OF A SACRED DEER**

Remember the uncomfortably slow, monotone dialogue in director Yorgos Lanthimos' earlier film, *The Lobster*? He uses the same speaking style in *The Killing of a Sacred Deer*. The effect makes the snail-paced film even slower and sets a chilly, anesthetized tone.

This film begins with Dr. Steven Murphy (Colin Farrell), a renowned cardiovascular surgeon, happily married to his ophthalmologist wife, Anna (Nicole Kidman) and they have two children, teen-age daughter, Kim (Raffey Cassidy), and her younger brother, Bob (Sunny Suljic).

But who is this other 16-year old boy who seems to have an unusually special bond with Dr. Murphy? The Doctor explains to his surgeon friend that Martin's unexpected appearance at the hospital is because Martin is interested in studying medicine and so the Doctor has taken him under his wing. We know something isn't quite right.

As the story unfolds, we learn that Martin's father died during surgery in the hands of Dr. Murphy, and that the doctor was suspected of not being sober when he performed the surgery.

Justice: An eye for an eye, or in this case a person for a person. In his slow, monotone voice, Martin coldly prophesizes that each member of the doctor's family will be paralyzed and then they will die. Steven's only option, if he wishes to avert this reckoning, is to execute one of them. The choice of victim is up to him. The tables have turned upside down. It's an ironically heartless prophecy for a heart surgeon who plays God saving people's lives. For viewers, it's an uncomfortable, stark pairing of a highly scientific world with the supernatural. And supernatural powers based on an ancient mythological world known for vengeful acts by Gods.

Most of our viewers missed the mention of Kim's school essay on Iphigenia which is the revealing tie-in to the film's plot and title. According to Greek mythology, Agamemnon, accidentally kills a deer in a grove sacred to the goddess Artemis. She punishes him by interfering with the winds so that his fleet cannot sail to Troy. The seer, Calchas, instructs him to sacrifice his daughter, Iphigenia, and thereby break the impasse. Agamemnon at first refuses but, pressured by the other commanders, eventually agrees.

The director successfully brings mythological vengeance into modern life and then amplifies the gore. Kidman, Farrell, and Keoghan performed their roles admirably and maybe it's even more challenging to restrain any semblance of emotion in speech, facial expressions, and gestures. But the story was not especially appealing to our film discussion group. A few disliked the absurdity. Others thought the film was at least interesting. The heavy music was appropriate: "Jesus Christus" from Schubert's "Stabat Mater" in F minor at the beginning, and the mighty opening of Bach's "St. John Passion" at the end. We rated the film a flat 2.7 on our scale of 1 to 5. (5 is the best.) (Most of us thought *The Lobster* was a more interesting story.)



See you at the movies!

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