



FILM: **TO LESLIE**

FDG RATING: 3.9 😊😊😊😊😊

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

Michael Morris: *director*  
Andrea Riseborough: *actress, Leslie*  
Marc Maron: *actor, Sweeney*

DATE: March 19, 2023

## DISCUSSION SUMMARY: **TO LESLIE**

Although Andrea Riseborough's outstanding performance in the 2022 film *To Leslie*, was overlooked by the Golden Globes, she was deservedly nominated for an Oscar (and many think she should have won the best actress award).

Based on actual events, Riseborough plays the part of Leslie, a single mother living in a rural west Texas town with her 13 year old son, James, when she becomes the local heroine winning \$190,000 in the lottery. A grainy flash back, news clip video shows her giddy as she is handed a giant check. She tells the reporter she's going to make a better life for herself and her son by buying a house and the boy says he's going to buy a guitar he's always wanted.

The film quickly flashes forward 6 years to present day. She obviously has squandered all the money on alcohol, and other addictions or bad decisions, and now is getting tossed out of the seedy motel where she has been living because she can't pay the rent and none of the monthly tenants will lend her any more cash. She looks derelict, shabby, desperate, and is loudly angry, resentful, defiant. We learn that her estranged son, who she had virtually abandoned and was raised by her friend Nancy, is living in an apartment in the city with a roommate and has a good construction job. As a last resort, Leslie reaches out to him asking if she can stay with him until she gets back on her feet. He agrees if she promises not to drink. She promises, but not only does she continue drinking hiding bottles under the mattress, she steals money from his roommate to buy more alcohol. James has no choice but to kick her out.

She returns to her hometown, an infamous failure. Yes, it's depressingly sad to watch but Riseborough's performance is so riveting, you can't look away. And she soon has a chance for redemption when a kind motel manager, Sweeney, offers her a job cleaning the rooms, plus a small wage a room to stay in, after finding her sleeping next to the trash bins. Understandably, it takes a while for Leslie to realize this is an opportunity to get her life back on track, since she is initially defiant and unpunctual to her duties and continues to spend her earnings on alcohol. But Sweeney, whose ex-wife was an alcoholic, is compelled to help Leslie overcome her addiction.

We were all so impressed with Sweeney's kindness and patience and understanding, underscoring the message that kindness can be a powerful healing force for addiction. Marc Maron's performance as Sweeney was extremely compelling. One discussion participant had doubts about the scenes as Sweeney is helping Leslie quit alcohol "cold turkey" because she didn't seem to have that strength of character. But watching her experience the horrible symptoms of withdrawal were very realistic. Another participant observed how phenomenal it is when someone supports you unconditionally. Another powerful scene at the end was when she and her friend Nancy resolve their differences and Nancy apologizes for not emotionally supporting Leslie when she really needed help.

Thankfully, the final scene, 10 months later, brings everything to a happy ending.

The fact that this award-deserving independent film was made in 19 days for \$1million, is a testament to the power of a good story told with compelling performances and well-crafted film techniques. We gathered a strong supportive 3.9 for *To Leslie* on our scale of 1 to 5. (5 is the best.)



See you at the movies!  
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