

Thursday January 25th 2024

The Quiet Girl (An Cailin Ciuin)

Ireland 2022 94mins Cert yy

This beautiful and compassionate film from first-time feature director Colm Bairéad, based on the novella 'Foster' by Claire Keegan, is a child's-eye look at a fallen world - already the film feels like a classic. There's a lovely scene in which the "quiet girl" of the title, 10-year-old Cait (played by newcomer Catherine Clinch), is reading 'Heidi' before bedtime - and this movie, for all its darkness and suppressed pain, has the solidity, clarity and storytelling gusto of that old-fashioned Alpine children's tale.

The setting is early 80s rural County Waterford where the spoken language is mostly Irish Gaelic. Cait is withdrawn, one of many siblings, always wandering off on her own over the nearby farmland. She is wide-eyed, silent and watchful, to the irritation of her exhausted and now once-again heavily pregnant mother (Kate Nic Chonaonaigh) and her thuggish, abusive and hungover father (Michael Patric). Without telling Cait or being mindful of her feelings, they decide they need a break from looking after her and pack her off for the summer to her mother's cousin Eibhlín (Carrie Crowley) and her taciturn farmer husband Sean (Andrew Bennett), whose vastly more prosperous and better run smallholding infuriates Cait's sullen dad. He can hardly summon good manners to make conversation before returning home and in his boorish haste, has a lapse of memory, which is to have serious consequences for Cait's new life.

Crowley and Bennett give heart-wrenchingly excellent performances as the unhappy, childless couple who have taken Cait in - particularly Crowley as Eibhlín, a well-bred, intelligent, elegant woman who is brightly engaged with the child as no one has ever been in her life. However, Cait is quick to understand that they have a "secret", which her sneering father already seems to know about.

As the long, hot summer progresses with the endlessness of childhood, Kate McCullough's superb cinematography and Emma Lowne's production design create a magically beautiful new world in which Cait feels at once threatened and exalted by - almost every shot is a vividly composed, painterly gem. A vinegary tang of black comedy and cynicism is provided by neighbour Una (a terrific performance from Joan Sheehy) who looks after Cait one afternoon and tells her what it is her foster parents aren't telling her.

Cait's quietness is perhaps the quietness of an abuse victim, or perhaps it's that of a clever person who knows that not talking is the way to survive. As Sean tells her, "Many's the person who's missed the opportunity to say nothing" - and when Cait returns home, it is her failure to obey this golden rule which is to cause a new stab of pain.

In another, lazier kind of movie, all this stillness and rural beauty, as seen by an enigmatically silent child who is accustomed to vanishing invisibly into the landscape, would be the ominous foretaste of something horrible or violent to come just before the final credits but *The Quiet Girl* does something much gentler than that, as well as being more real and true - it is a jewel of a film.

Acknowledgements: Peter Bradshaw, *The Guardian*

Leading Players

Catherine Clinch	Cait
Carrie Crowley	Eibhlín
Andrew Bennett	Sean
Kate Nic Chonaonaigh	Mam
Michael Patric	Da

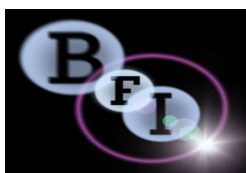
Production Credits

Director	Colm Bairéad
Producers	Cleona Ni Chualaoi, Maire Ni Chonlain + 2 others
Screenplay	Colm Bairéad
Cinematography	Kate McCullough
Original Music	Stephen Rennicks

Coming Soon

February 29th

IN A LONELY PLACE (USA, 1950, 95mins, Cert PG) Possibly one of Nicolas Ray's best films, this fascinating *noir* has Humphrey Bogart, in of one his most nuanced roles, as an emotionally unstable screenwriter given an alibi against a murder accusation by his glamorous neighbour (Gloria Grahame) which leads to romance - with dark overtones. Despite their great on-screen chemistry in this film, Bogart and Grahame never worked together again.



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