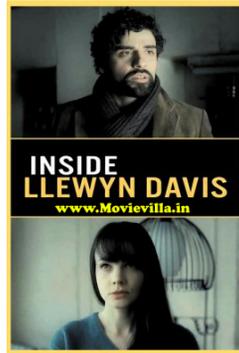


INSIDE LLEWYN DAVIS By Lorraine Viade, Psy.D.



The Coen brothers are at it again. This time they take us back in time to the days when folk music was about to hit big to tell the story of a man of those times. Llewyn Davis represents those singers whose love for music transcends all else, but who, despite talent and persistence, cannot make it big on their own in the business. There is only one Bob Dylan but there are many like Llewyn Davis singing in small venues owned by friends whose lives are never what they might have been had some things been different. And yet, it isn't about fame, fortune or even records. It is about the love of music and the need to tell a story in only the way a folk song can. The music in this film is beautiful. Even the wonderfully offbeat tune "Mr. Kennedy" is so well done that it is up this year for best original song.

Oscar Isaac plays Llewyn as a much better looking Woody Allen-esque, angst-ridden character whose comedic adventures serve to lift us out of the depressing and mundane world he seems to live in. A wanderer and troubadour, Llewyn goes out on his own after his musical partner is gone. What he finds is that he may not be as good as he was with a partner, but his need to write and to perform are not hampered by circumstance. A-week-in-the-life, when the Coen brothers are behind it, is bound to be interesting, moving, funny, sad and different.

This film is pleasing to both the eye and the ear. The acting is amazing by the entire cast. The music soulful, sad and introspective as good folk music should be. We become mesmerized by the disappointment in Isaac's young but weary face. And as he irresponsibly navigates the world, we wonder how things will turn out for him in the end. Musicians love to play and Llewyn Davis demonstrates that love in ways that capture the essence of what it means to be a singer-songwriter. His voice is lilting, sad and thoughtful. This film hits all the right notes, and if you like quiet independent films, this one is for you. I really enjoyed it, although I wanted more at the end.

The theme here is that even if you try to do something else, what you are meant to do is going to win out no matter how hard you try not to do it. You may be poor, you may be depressed and disappointed but sometimes fate takes a stand and keeps you right where you need to be and the choice is no longer yours. For the fictional Llewyn Davis,

music is more important than friends, family or lovers. That is not an easy path but when you have talent and desire to use it, nothing else matters.

I give Llewyn Davis four guitars. Play on, Llewyn. Play on.

