

Shipham Community Cinema

presents

**Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri
Cert (15)**

Director: Martin McDonagh. **Starring:** Frances McDormand, Woody Harrelson, Sam Rockwell

This double Oscar-winning black comedy stars a magnificent Frances McDormand (2018 Oscar for Best Actress) as Mildred Hayes, a middle-aged woman toughened and weather-beaten by tragedy, whose teenage daughter was raped and murdered some months previously and no arrests have been made. So Mildred rents three unused billboards just outside of town, demanding to know why the town's police chief has achieved precisely nothing. They astonish and infuriate the town authorities in ways she clearly intends and welcomes. The police chief Willoughby (Woody Harrelson) coolly declines to be provoked, with troubles of his own, but when incompetent, jeeringly racist second-in-command Officer Dixon (Academy Award winner or Best Supporting Actor Sam Rockwell), an immature mother's boy with a penchant for violence, gets involved, the battle between Mildred and Ebbing's law enforcement is only exacerbated.



The three billboards are cathartic monuments to her rage and grief; they attract the attention of local TV news; Peter Bradshaw in *The Guardian* wrote that "*watching it is like having your funny bone struck repeatedly, expertly and very much too hard by a karate super-black-belt capable of bringing a rhino to its knees with a single punch behind the ear. ... It is a film about vengeance, violence and the acceptance of death, combining subtlety and unsubtlety, and moreover wrong-footing you as to what and whom it is centrally about. The drama happens in a town with an insidiously pessimistic name - Ebbing, Missouri, a remote and fictional community in the southern United States, where the joy of life does seem to be receding. The America he conjures up here has something of the Coen Brothers and McDormand gives her best performance since her starring role as the pregnant Minnesota police chief in their Fargo (available from SCC's Film Library) twenty years ago.*"

Frances McDormand's face eloquently conveys someone who is past hoping, past fearing, though not past caring. She sometimes affects a bandana, giving her the look of a careworn warrior. She is separated, working in an uninviting gift shop and living with her son Robbie (Lucas Hedges) while her no-account husband Charlie (John Hawkes) has left her to be with a 19-year-old woman employed at the town zoo. However, in a cameo typical of this ensemble, the town's dwarf, wittily played by Peter Dinklage, has a major crush on her, and his gallant admiration is to play an important role.

The three billboards are a catalyst, creating and accelerating crises that are only indirectly connected to Mildred's own tragedy. The film switches from black comedy to bleak tragedy when the disaster

which befalls Chief Willoughby himself, an entirely separate situation which is to bleed into her own, leads to mass condemnation by the collectively irrational populace of her protest.

What begins as a narrow and focused drama gradually escalates to a film with big themes and ideas, relevant social commentary, and much more subplots than anticipated. It raises big questions - but few answers - about anger, revenge, violence, and kindness. The story shows people in a realistic light rarely seen on screen. We're presented with characters and their genuine emotions. Nothing feels sugarcoated and it never lacks emotional impact. It is only when a certain officer is relieved of his gun and badge that he becomes effective in law enforcement. People we thought were just cartoons gradually assume the lineaments of rounded human beings.

With outstanding screen writing and near perfect editing, this powerhouse of a film was a close contender for the Academy Awards "Best Film" (beaten in the end by next month's SCC film *The Shape of Water*). It is a film which offers no clear reassurance on tone or narrative direction or who you must laugh with and at. And Frances McDormand holds it all together: a *Mother Courage* resolved on action and toughly holding on to her sense of order and sense of humour.

TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME:

Announcements

Trailers for *Get Out* - our extra show on 28th September
The Shape of Water - our main feature on 12th October

Short Film: *Carpark*

Main feature (115 mins) with a break after about 55 minutes

We welcome your feedback. Tell us what you thought of the show on our Facebook page, by email to cinema@shiphamhall.co.uk or by filling out a feedback form, (hand it to any committee member).

THE COMMUNITY CINEMA MEMBERS' FILM LIBRARY

Last season's films are all here along with those near misses that we would love to have shown but didn't have enough slots. Recent additions include:

Sweet Country, *120 BPM*, *Guernsey Literary & Potato Peel Pie Society*, *You Were Never Really Here*, *Logan Lucky*, *My Cousin Rachel*, *A Quiet Place*, *Lady Bird*, *The Square*, *All The Money In The World*

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