

Brooklyn

Here's a film for those sundry filmgoers who lament "They don't make 'em like they used to." "Brooklyn," a coming-of-age-cum love story, is a throwback--in the best sense. Tracing a formative year in the young life of an Irish colleen, the film bathes the early 1950's in a warm glow and makes a star out of Saoirse (pronounced SEER-shuh) Ronan (*now in cinemas*,

"Brooklyn," directed by John Crowley, has a simple plot, finely crafted by screenwriter Nick Hornby from a prize-winning 2009 novel by Colm Toibin. In 1952, Eilis Lacey (Ronan), youngest daughter of a widow from Wexford, has a chance for work in America through the interventions of a family friend living in Brooklyn, Father Flood (Jim Broadbent). After initial shyness, she adjusts well to a shop girl's job at a department store, takes up bookkeeping classes, and learns local mores around the table at the boarding house of Mrs. Kehoe (Julie Walters). Though almost totally surrounded by other Irish immigrants, she also finds romance with an upright Italian plumber Tony (Emory Cohen), and they dream of a home on Long Island.

After learning of the sudden death of her devoted older sister Rose (Fiona Glascott), Eilis returns home for the burial, during which time she is gently courted by a local chap, Jim Farrell (Domhnall Gleason). Jim is just as decent as Tony, well off, and admired by Mrs. Lacey (Jane Brennan). Thus arises Eilis's dilemma, to settle back in her beloved, comfortable Ireland or to take a chance on Tony and life in the New World.

Simple the tale may be, but its working out is exquisite, both in tenderness and style. Locations in the real Wexford are coated in green and straw shades, while the Brooklyn settings (shot both in the city and in Montreal) are coated in lovely nostalgic browns, rusts, and oranges. Everything glows.

"Brooklyn" will fondly remind veteran moviegoers of post war studio films of first love starring the likes of Jennifer Jones or Maureen O'Hara. Young Ronan could be said to be the current equivalent of these stars, with a roseate face and delicate smile overlaying a demeanor of sturdy intelligence. Now, at 21, she has matured strikingly (as she does during the film) after having made a notable debut in "Atonement" eight years ago.

The rest of the cast is stellar, all amiable folk making both the Olde Sod and Brooklyn appear warm and attractive. The two young swains are unassuming and charming, either one an appropriate catch for Eilis. Jim Broadbent handles his avuncular padre role with ease, while Julie Walters is a stitch (and the film does make time for humor) as the gossipy landlady who aims to cement good behavior in her young lady residents.

(The film is rated "PG-13 and runs 111 mins.)

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