

Waking Ned Devine

Some critical word of mouth has already tagged *Waking Ned Devine* as this year's *The Full Monty*, the latest pixilated comedy from the British Isles. A more apt comparison might be with the Scottish comedy *Local Hero* (1983) although the setting is Irish this time. Though such comparisons give some sense of the spirit of the film, *Waking Ned Devine*, written and directed by Kirk Jones, is best seen as its own sprightly self.

The plot turns on a lottery ticket with a big payoff, held by poor Ned Devine who has a fatal heart attack upon learning of his win. Local buddies Jackie O'Shea (Ian Bannen) and Michael O'Sullivan (David Kelly) learn in the papers that the ticket resides in their tiny hamlet of Tulaigh Morh (52 souls), and, in trying to smell out the winner, they discover the stricken Ned with the winning ticket in his rigid hand. Since Ned has no family, the two codgers devise a plot to convince the lottery board that Ned is still alive so they--and the entire village--can split the payoff. Complications ensue as the two must deal with Ned's corpse, convince the visiting lottery representative that Ned still lives, broker the payoff deal with the townsfolk, and persuade a local curmudgeon to go along with their scheme.

This is whimsical stuff, darkened nicely by its brushes with naked greed and stark death and seasoned by a sub-plot involving a stalwart pig farmer and his lass (James Nesbit and Susan Lynch). Messrs. Bannen and Kelly, the former a cheeky 70 year old and the latter a cadaverous 69, are contemporary leprechauns, swimming and tooling around on motorbikes in the buff, playing up to their quaint neighbors, and working the naive lottery rep like snake oil salesmen. Yet they are lovable, too, of course, as is almost everybody in Tulaigh Morh, a delightful place to while away a couple of fanciful hours.

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