

“CODA”

If you want a “feel good” movie you can’t do better than “CODA.” (The acronym for “Children of Deaf Adults”) Ruby Rossi (Emilia Jones) is a 17 year old who has spent most of her young life acting as her family’s contact with the hearing world. Whether as one of the crew of her father’s (Troy Kotsur) fishing boat or running interference for her mother (Marlee Matlin) and brother (Daniel Durant), she is one busy young woman. But when she joins the school choir her life will go in a new direction. Watching that journey makes for one of the most emotionally satisfying films I have seen this year. Among the things that make the film so special are:

- The actors all give first rate performances but the two standouts are Emilia Jones and the choir director Mr. V (Eugenio Derbez). Jones gives one of the best performances by a young actress I have seen since I first saw Anya Taylor-Joy in “The Queen’s Gambit”. As Ruby’s “tough love” over the top music guru, Derbez commands your attention every time he is on screen.
- The way the film takes us into the world of the deaf. Today speeches and public service announcements are regularly accompanied by someone off to the side signing. But to watch Ruby’s family’s extended conversations (her father is a master of salty sign language) is to give one a whole new appreciation of this unique way of communication. (All the actors who play her family come from the deaf community).
- Then there is Ruby’s singing audition where, after her relentless tutelage by Mr. V, she hopes to earn a musical scholarship. She steps out onto the stage in an empty auditorium, her only audience being the three judges. She is paralyzed with stage fright but finally summons up her courage and begins singing Joni Mitchell’s classic “Both Sides, Now”. Part way into the song she glances up and there, occupying the only seats in the balcony, is her family. What happens next would warm the heart of a Grinch. It is a sublimely beautiful scene on so many different levels.

You will not regret the time you spend with Ruby Rossi.

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