

## CHELMSFORD FILM CLUB

An Independent film society based in Chelmsford

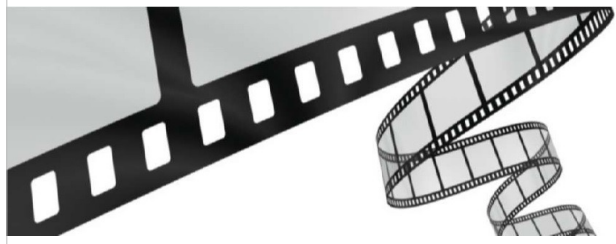
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### LADY BIRD USA 2017 93 MINS

Writer and Director: Greta Gerwig  
Christine 'Lady Bird': Saoirse Ronan  
Marion McPherson: Laurie Metcalf  
Danny O'Neill: Lucas Hedges  
Julie Steffans: Beanie Feldstein

It is rare to scroll through reviews for a film and not find a dissenting voice, but this seems to be the case for *Lady Bird*. On both sides of the Atlantic it opened to universal respectful and affectionate praise. Promoted as Gerwig's first sole writer/directorial debut it has been nominated and won numerous prizes and awards. Gerwig of course has not come from nowhere. She had worked on films with friends, after being rejected for a graduate playwriting programme and has also acted in and collaborated with Noah Baumbach on two different projects; *Frances Ha* 2012 and *Mistress America* 2015.

"I'm interested in young women, I'm interested in middle-aged women, I'm interested in women, period. Maybe not for ever, but for now."

"I like setting up expectations, then subverting them and then delivering somewhere else. Collectively, you feel like, yes that was a full meal. But it was not unexpected. There was nutmeg in it. Movies should feel surprising but somehow inevitable."

Put together these quotes from Gerwig perhaps explain how *Lady Bird* works. It has all the usual ingredients of a coming of age saga; the customary conflict with a parent, first relationship, first sexual experience, close friendship, breakup with a friend, the "admissions process", inappropriate decisions and attempts to establish a personality but played so that everyone is mocked but no one is treated with cruelty or contempt.

The film is set in 2002/3, deliberately before Facebook and social media took over. Gerwig in fact banned all phones from the set for both actors and crew alike. She also asked Ronan to dye her own hair pink, which she did in her hotel sink and it looked "perfectly dreadful." She was also determined that her teenagers would have acne, so that it would look like a film about teenagers and not glossy ones from a fashion magazine.

The film is also a homage to Gerwig's home town of Sacramento, ( which *Lady Bird* describes as the Mid-West of California),but it is not autobiographical.

*Lady Bird's* name is "Given to me, by me," and acts as an assertion of the opinionated personality she is trying to forge. Equally forceful however is the personality of her mother, Marion, a nurse, who works tirelessly to keep her family afloat after her husband loses his job. The turbulent bond between her and her daughter, who is just like her, loving, strong willed and deeply opinionated is the what everything in the film comes back to. The car sequence where the two of them are returning from visiting college campuses and an argument ensues, encapsulates the relationship and the personalities of the two women.

Equally satisfying is the friendship between *Lady Bird* and Julie, with well-matched performances and a script that shows an eye and an ear for detail for both barbs and affection.

Gerwig does manage to invest in all her characters though, even though from the perspective of this storyline they are there for *Lady Bird* to reflect the adolescent mix of self- assurance and insecurity, idealism and hypocrisy and enthusiasm and scepticism.

Our next screening: *In Between* on October 23. Donations of books, CDs, DVDs gratefully received.

