

Whale Rider

Louise's Lazy Day Review

I decided to treat myself to a "lazy" day over the Christmas holidays. My favourite kind of lazy day involves putting on my most comfy clothes and then settling down on the couch, swaddled in blankets, warmed by hot chocolate, clutching a huge bowl of popcorn, to watch a movie. If that movie forces me to reach for the Kleenex box, the experience is made even better.

On this particular lazy day, the movie of choice was Whale Rider - a flick I'd been trying to see for a while. The previews, the music and the incredibly moving posters that feature the face of the movie, Keisha Castle-Hughes, intrigued me. So when I saw the DVD sitting on the shelf at my local video store, I snatched it up.

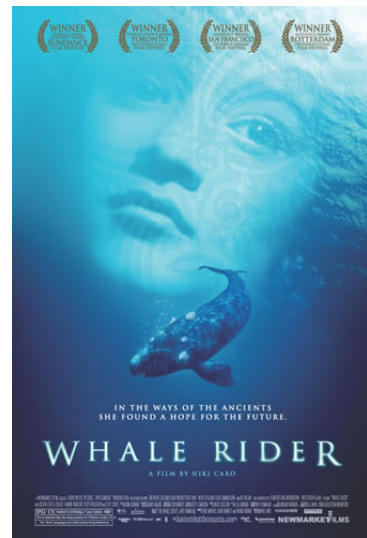
Back home, on the couch with my popcorn and all my lazy day accessories, I was mesmerized by this story.

The film, based on the book of the same name by Witi Ihimaera, is set in a Maori village on the coast of New Zealand. The tribe's chiefs are descendants of Paikea, the Whale Rider, and in every generation, a male heir born to the Chief succeeds to the title.

The Chief's eldest son fathers twins - a boy and a girl. The boy and his mother die in childbirth. The surviving baby girl is named Pai and grows up in the loving care of her grandparents, Koro and Flowers.

Though Koro loves his granddaughter, he claims she has no use to him (being a girl), and begins to train the boys in the village in an effort to find the next Chief.

I won't spoil the story by telling you any more than that.



But I will say that the movie has many layers and touches on some great community themes.



It's a portrait of a community in decline and subtly illustrates their efforts to survive. It's about how communities can come together, find common ground and forge a common identity.

The story is also about finding leadership in unexpected places. It's about respecting the traditions of our ancestors while recognizing the energy, wisdom and promise of youth.

This film is beautifully shot (though how can you go wrong with a New Zealand location?). Everything about this movie is rich - colour, texture, cinematography, and sound. I could do a whole other review on the haunting, emotional music.

Consider picking up the DVD version for extra features including cast and crew interviews, director's commentary and some featurettes.

A three Kleenex event, Whale Rider is heartfelt and heart breaking. Definitely a great flick for the whole family to watch.

For more info, check out the movie's website:
<http://www.whaleridertthemovie.com/>.



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