



BORDERLINES FILM FESTIVAL

THAT THEY MAY FACE THE RISING SUN (12A)

Director: Pat Collins

Starring: Barry Ward, Anna Bederke, Ruth McCabe

Ireland/UK, 2023, 1 hour 47 minutes, English

Warmly received at the London Film Festival last autumn, *That They May Face the Rising Sun* works with an ensemble of Irish actors to bring to the screen a rural community in the west of Ireland in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The director, Pat Collins, is an experienced maker of documentaries, including one on the writer John McGahern, and it is McGahern's final novel that is the source material for this film. The cast includes Barry Ward (Joe Rutledge), Lalor Roddy (Patrick), Brendan Conroy (Bill Evans), Ruth McCabe (Mary) and Phillip Dolan (Jamesie), as well as German actor Anna Bederke as Kate.

Collins and his co-writer Eamon Little have worked closely with the novel, first published in 2002. Despite inevitable omissions, the use of voice-over narration enables some direct use of McGahern's writing, and the birdsong throughout the soundtrack (alongside the composed music by Irene and Linda Buckley) reappears from the novel.

McGahern's novel is greatly loved by its many readers, and Collins's adaptation takes its place in a long tradition of cinematic conversations with literary texts. Reflecting the novel, the film is deceptively simple in its pace, a study of the seemingly ordinary. There is 'time to breathe in a way unusual in modern cinema' (Sarah Manvel). Joe and his wife are incomers, he returning and she arriving from a more cosmopolitan life; this is subtly underlined by the casting, with Barry Ward a well-known Irish actor who knows the book and Anna Bederke someone coming to the script with no previous familiarity with the novel.

Both the companionship and the complexities of living in a remote community are the focus here. The forces of change and the pressures of history are evident, in ways that are specific to Ireland, but, as Collins has said in an interview, are also universal. Time is marked not only by clocks, but by seasonal change and human ritual. Richard Kenrick's cinematography presents the beauty of the west of Ireland, Loch Nafooney near Galway standing in here for McGahern's Leitrim. In a broadening ecological perspective, the film invites meditation on the relationship between humans, creatures and the landscape - often of course a working landscape, for we witness too the rhythms of the farming year.

What seems to emerge is that nothing is ordinary and the film demands attention to the question of what constitutes happiness.

Preview courtesy of Conic.

Notes compiled by Catherine Neale

If you like THAT THEY MAY FACE THE RISING SUN, you may also enjoy:

EVIL DOES NOT EXIST (12A) - In *Drive My Car* director Ryusuke Hamaguchi's enigmatic new drama, a rural community in harmony with the natural environment faces the threat of change.



**BORDERLINES
FILM FESTIVAL**

SMOKE SAUNA SISTERHOOD (15) - In the darkness of a smoke sauna, women share their innermost secrets and intimate experiences, regaining their strength through a sense of communion.