

Review: Inside Llewyn Davis (2014, Joel and Ethan Coen)



Musicals have, of late, come thick and fast into mainstream cinema. Camp, dazzling and epic, they're made to leave the viewer either drained of every single tear, or filled with a disgusting amount of joy. They've become so popular, in fact that we have forgotten about something altogether more beautiful: a film about music.

Inside Llewyn Davis is the latest venture by the Coen Brothers – the world renowned film makers who made their names with the likes of *Fargo*, *The Big Lebowski* and *No Country For Old Men*. They can make comedies, they can make thrillers and they can most certainly make films about music.

Set in the Greenwich Village folk scene over the winter of 1961, *Inside Llewyn Davis* portrays the life of a struggling, luckless folk musician attempting to make it solo after the loss of his musical partner.

The film itself is shot with such comely conviction: washed out, cold hues that invade the screen make it feel like a film plucked from the film archives, rather than a contemporary piece. Oscar Isaac, a surprisingly fairly unknown actor, gives a wonderful lead performance as the title character, being every bit the failing, bitter but intrinsically hopeful folk musician the Coen Brothers surely wanted him to be. He also acts as a truly talented musician, playing and singing every note himself with effortless folk charm. Carey Mulligan, playing Jean, is great as always. Her icy, short tempered attitude feels authentic for the most part, only faltering with the incessant expletives that pour from her mouth. The fault there is with the script, a minor one at that. As a

whole, the film is written with such beauty, pain and melancholy that every character on screen feels real; a development of the Coen's minds that has extended far more than most films tend to.

The music is what makes *Inside Llewyn Davis* come alive. The lead track of sorts, *Fare Thee Well*, was co-written by Mulligan's husband and folk music aficionado, Marcus Mumford. His voice paired with Isaac's lead the film in what can only be described as one of the most effortlessly beautiful scenes the Coens have ever illustrated.

It may not be perfect, but *Inside Llewyn Davis* is a truly masterful piece of filmmaking from a pair you'd expect no less from.

Inside Llewyn Davis plays from 24 January 2014 at the **Cameo Cinema, Home Street** and from 21 February 2014 at **Filmhouse, Lothian Road**.



Images : [Studio Canal](#)