

Film review – Macbeth ****



Macbeth – The Scottish Film ****

I love Shakespeare.

I love the complexity and the political machinations of the characters.

The new Macbeth movie directed by Justin Kurzel is a great advertisement for Scotland. The landscape is beautiful. Castles, craggy peaks, snow covered mountains, mists and peat bogs are beautifully presented. This new film starring Michael Fassbender is a little different though.

From the opening scene – as he buries his infant son – we know that something is different in this Shakespeare. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are grieving and like so many fictional grieving or childless couples they fill the vacuum with a lust for power. I am reminded of the characters of Kevin Spacey and Robin Wright as President and First Lady in the hugely successful House of Cards. Clever and ambitious people find a way to be productive and powerful when they are undistracted by the minutiae of family life.

The action is superbly presented and while the landscape is a huge star in its own right, it appears only briefly through the muddy, bloody and misty presentation. Swords pierce flesh as if they are shotguns, daggers stab with the loudness of a single shot pistol.

The shock of the sound is visceral and disturbing. There is no escape as the slow motion of the wounding is inflicted without mercy for the filmgoer. Don't expect a line for line rendition of Shakespeare – the dialogue is shortened and different – although for the shortest of Shakespeare's tragedies this is a

movie that seems long even for its 115minutes.

✘ The star for me was Banquo played by Paddy Considine. He gets the part, he really gives the impression of being a great friend willing to believe and at the same time his suspicion emerges from the countless bodies bloodied at the hands of Macbeth.

MacDuff, played by Sean Harris, is also magnificent. His voice lends an uneasy edge to the character, like a thug in a dark alley. This is not someone you want to mess with.

Fassbender in the title role is under-utilised. His character is brilliantly formed in the early movie but the descent into madness is sometimes underplayed and at other times over-acted by Fassbender.

Lady Macbeth, played by Marion Cotillard, in this movie is no Claire Underwood. She trades sex to encourage her husband and to fulfil their shared ambition, but the character is not as forceful or strong as I have imagined her.

Still a great and powerful movie. The biggest let-down was the UK premiere at the Festival Theatre, the majority of viewers complaining of the poor sound system and the inaudible dialogue during some of the scenes.

Macbeth ****, Festival Theatre *.