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Lincoln

By Leonard Pirkle

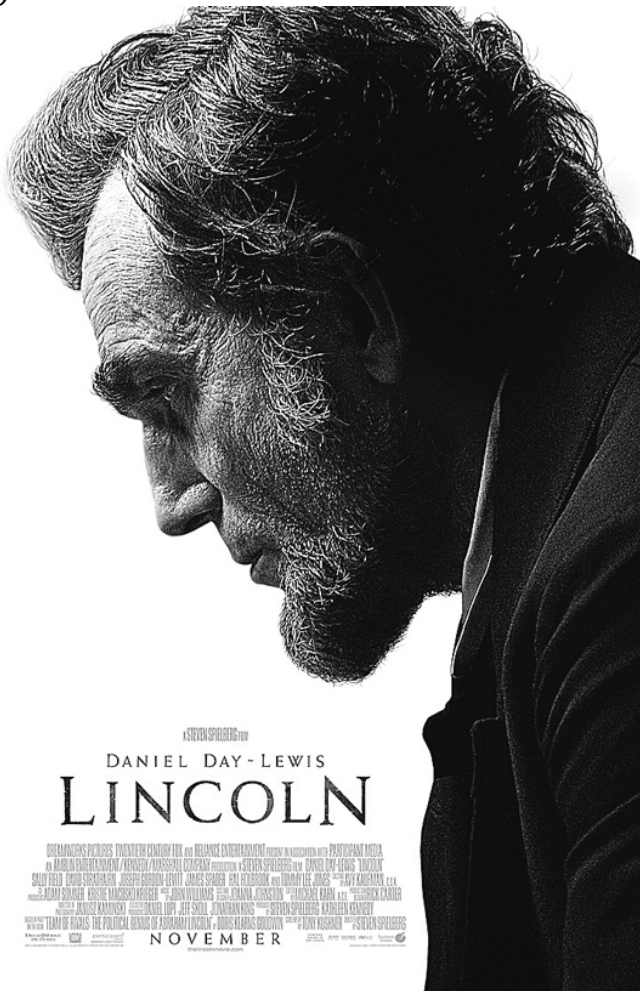


Photo Touchstone Pictures

Steven Spielberg has once again directed a film that draws the viewer into each and every detail on the screen, much like a painting by one of the Masters. Lincoln is a film that should be seen in a grand old cinema such as the Orinda Theatre.

Set in 1865 during the final year of the American Civil War, the film deals with a very select matter of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, which outlaws slavery and involuntary servitude, and its passage through Congress. The dilemma facing our 16th president was whether to end the war and save thousands of lives or push through the amendment and set a moral compass to be followed for generations to come. Of course we know the decision he made, but that does not diminish the drama that unfolds and the behind-the-scenes shenanigans that ensue by his minions.

The main cast of Daniel Day-Lewis as Lincoln, Sally Field as Mary Todd Lincoln and Tommy Lee Jones as Thaddeus Stevens, has a combined five Oscars to their credits along with Spielberg's three, establishing the bone fides for an instant classic. The remaining cast is well selected with each member delivering a screen presence that demonstrates a high proficiency at their art.

The 2.5-hour masterpiece is almost entirely dialog driven, the script by Tony Kushner is bound to be nominated for an Oscar; its brilliance is that each character brings something of utmost importance to each scene. Lincoln was historically known for being a "story teller," the homespun humor and his ability to bridge difficult issues and challenges through parable is evident in this film and a testament to the depth of this screenplay.

The film is rated PG-13 for intense scenes from the horrors of war, not quite on the level of those shown in the opening moments of Saving Private Ryan, but Spielberg did obviously want to establish the basis of the dilemma facing President Lincoln in delaying the end of the bloodiest war in

our history. Taking children to this film should be an informed decision; younger kids won't last the 150 minutes and will be impacted by the scenes of carnage.

I highly recommend that you see this film on the big screen and see it soon.

Leonard Pirkle is the executive director of the California Independent Film Festival and can be seen each Tuesday at 6 p.m. on the Real to Reel Show, www.TRadioV.com.

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