

Film Review: Life’s Other Plans at Full Disclosure in ‘Philomena’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on November 27, 2013 - 4:26pm

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CHICAGO – Although “Philomena” sounds like a faraway land, it actually is a name of a real Irish lady, who lost her son through a Catholic adoption service that was designed to hide her out-of-wedlock pregnancy. Judi Dench portrays the title character as an older woman, with Steve Coogan as the reporter trying to help locate the son for her.



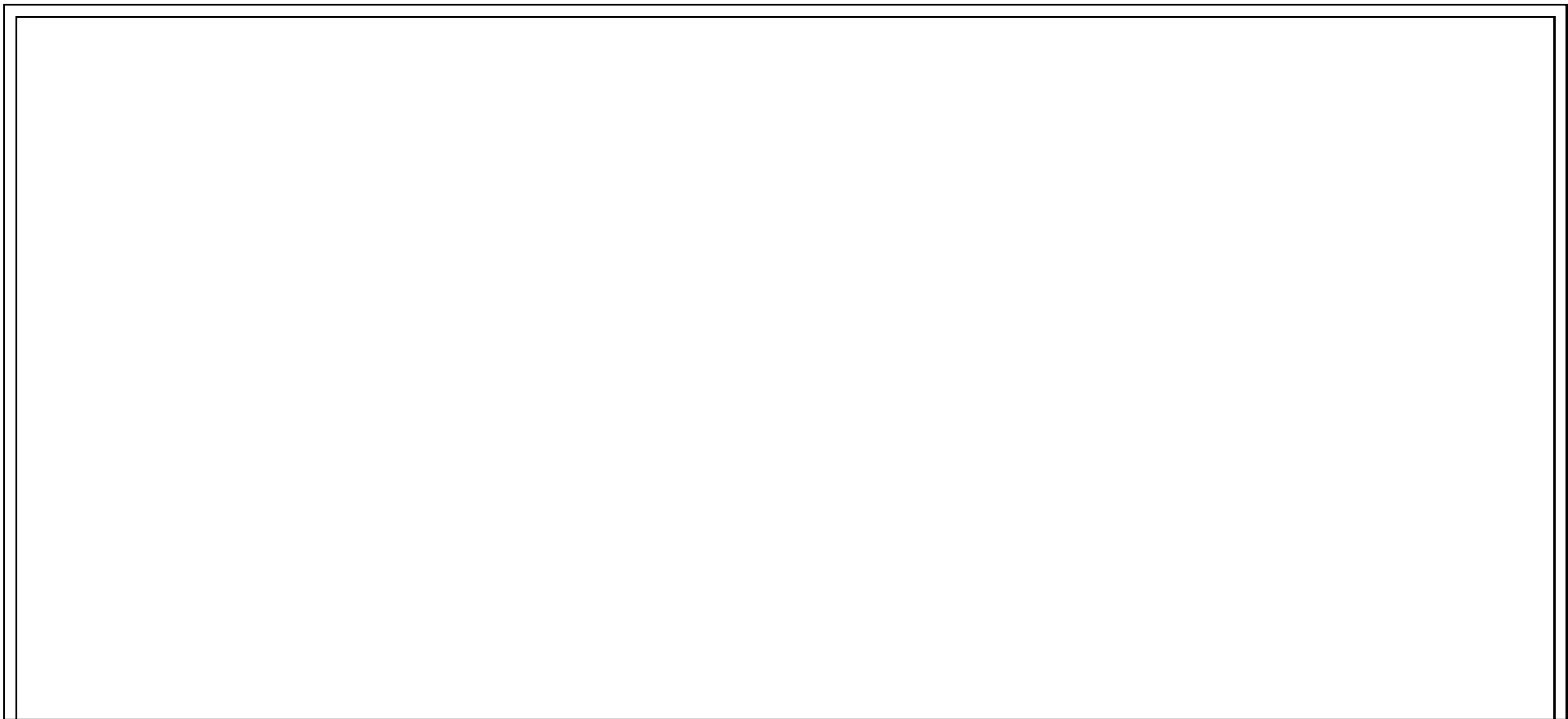
This is basically a two character story, with the old lady and the reporter discovering something about themselves through the process. They travel together, they make discoveries together and ultimately come to conclusions about the circumstance together. The is partially a film about the Catholic Church – and their unique ability to sweep harsh sins under the rug – and it is also a testament to that church, whose power with their followers include a deep and abiding forgiveness. Comic actor Steve Coogan also co-wrote the screenplay, and matches Dame Judi in performance, warmth and salvation.

Martin Sixsmith (Coogan) has been unceremoniously fired as press liason for a high British official. He is aimless and clueless as to his next move, when a story about an Irish mother named Philomena (Judi Dench) comes to light. She has had a full life as a nurse, and has raised a daughter, but she laments a son she had lost. In flashback, the young Philomena (Sophie Kennedy Clark) is shown making the baby, working for Irish nuns while hiding the pregnancy, and then watching the son being shipped to America for adoption.

In modern times, Philomena decides to help Martin pursue the story of finding her son. This takes the couple to America to do the research, and along the way they form a kinship, despite Martin’s anti-religious stance and Philomena’s ardent Roman Catholicism. What they discover will change both their lives, especially within the passion of absolution and coming to terms.

‘Philomena’ continues its U.S. release in Chicago on November 27th. See local listings for theaters and show times. Featuring Steve Coogan, Judi Dench, Sean Mahon, Sophie Kennedy Clark and Mare Winningham. Screenplay by Steve Coogan and Jeff Pope. Directed by Stephen Frears. Rated “PG-13”

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Philomena (Judi Dench) and Martin (Steve Coogan) Contemplate Destiny in 'Philomena'
Photo credit: The Weinstein Company

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