

“The Killing of a Sacred Deer”

By Helen Lutz

Don't be afraid of being different; be afraid of being the same as everyone else. Just as houses come in all types: one story, two story, three bedroom, five bedroom, fireplace, etc., and cars come in all types: large, small, coupe, van, sporty, electric, etc., this holds true in the world of cinema as well. It's good to embrace the fact that people are also different enjoying various pastimes, foods and movies. Film offers each of us funny, scary, romantic, action, space, fantasy, dramatic – a vast array of story types. Not everyone enjoys the same type of feature film; I tend to shy away from the horror/slasher movies.



For those who enjoy an ‘art house’ movie featuring an ‘A list’ cast, with some psychological thriller thrown in for good measure, “The Killing of a Sacred Deer” might be right up your alley. Starring Colin Farrell as Dr. Steven Murphy, a renowned surgeon living in his perfect world, Nicole Kidman plays his lovely wife, Anna who is also a doctor of ophthalmology. To finish up the Murphy’s family are their two perfect Stepford-type children, Kim (Raffey Cassidy) and little brother Bob (Sunny Suljic). The Murphys live in the perfect house, drive the perfect cars and have the perfect friends, however, they also have a dirty little secret; a secret destined to destroy their perfect existence.

Dr. Steven secretly takes a young man, Martin (Barry Keoghan) under his wing (no, this is not ripped from the pages of today’s news). Martin has no father and Steven befriends the boy giving him advice and expensive gifts, all unknown to the doctor’s family. When Steven finally invites Martin to dinner with the family, things begin to change. Martin, a little older than the Murphy children opens up new worlds to them like cigarettes and underarm hair – yes, Martin is a bit peculiar.

What becomes truly strange is that one morning when Steven and Anna are yelling for Bob to get ready for school and come down to breakfast they learn that Bob’s legs are paralyzed. Rushed to the hospital, the doctors run every test imaginable without finding the reason. As Steven begins to distance himself from Martin, the boy clues him in that the paralysis is the first affliction, followed closely by an unwillingness to eat, then bleeding from the eyes and finally death. All of Steven’s family will eventually suffer the same afflictions, the solution to the problem is simple ... but how strong is Steven?

“The Killing of a Sacred Deer” takes us on a slow moving journey with the Murphy family as they first embrace and then turn on Martin. What is his power or does he even have a power? What kind of nightmares are the Murphys forced to live? The movie moves along methodically as director Yorgos Lanthimos places each metered word into the mouths of his characters. What is the dirty little secret and how can the bewitching Martin be stopped? It takes patience on the part of the audience to watch as the story slowly unfolds. This film will probably not fit main stream movie goers’ tastes, however, the more one thinks about it – the creepier it becomes. On a scale of one to four Hart Beats ... I give “The Killing of a Sacred Dear” TWO HARTS. It’s definitely as different as it is dark.