

## Manchester by the Sea

Many antagonists in movies nominated for the Oscars in 2017, are introverted men, who seem to be constantly committed to hold back a multitude of emotions ready to explode: from *La La Land's* Sebastian, portrayed with measured calmness by the ever so excellent Ryan Gosling, to the tormented Chiron, protagonist of *Moonlight*.

The Casey Affleck's Lee Chandler is an extreme case of this paradigm, a true misanthrope, who doesn't socialise even with the people who try to talk to him. In *Manchester-by-the-Sea*, a sea town in Massachusetts, which is coincidentally also his hometown, he is known as "that" Lee Chandler, a name that everyone quietly whispers, as if the person whom it belongs to has just come back from the after life. However Lee comes from Boston, a city located only an hour and a half away from the small and unknown town: there he lives in a small apartment that looks more like a single room, and unenthusiastically working as a janitor. It's when he is informed of his brother's death that Lee is forced to return to *Manchester-by-the-Sea*, a place where he left his past. The discovery that he was chosen by the late Joe to be his sixteen year old son's legal guardian changes his plans of staying only for a few days. In a story where in a totally unexpected way tears and laughter are equally mixed, the extraordinary Casey Affleck plays the part of a mediocre man from the working class with a complex personality, who tries to hide, under a thick layer of ice, an ache that always follows him.

Already known for various movies (as the underrated *Gone Baby Gone* and *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford*) but more often known for being the "less famous brother of Ben Affleck" (other than not being particularly liked in Hollywood because of certain accusations of harassments), Casey has the face of a boy and regular lineaments, that have usually made him perfect for secondary characters instead of the protagonist.

***Manchester by the Sea*** finally gives him the opportunity to take advantage of his talents: with an interpretation that never goes over-the-top, Affleck embodies the drama of an American province, which, in this case, is used as the background, ideally moving towards the future, like ships ready to sail, but still connected to the past, from which it can't detach itself.

Lee's story of the past is conveyed through a gradual (and delicate) revelation, made of occasional flashbacks of everyday life, that, like a puzzle, re-form memories of a shattered life.

Lucas Hedges, who plays the part of the nephew, and Michelle Williams, Lee's ex-wife, Randi, accompany Casey Affleck in this journey, together with a touching soundtrack, in which original pieces of Lesley Barber are united with classical music, voicing the inexpressible feelings of the protagonist.

***Manchester by the Sea*** isn't a classical story of an heroic redemption from Hollywood: it is a story that talks about the real human inadequacy in front of the insuperable challenges that, in a cruelly sudden and incomprehensible way, life puts on our paths. Little men with small ambitions and little resources, try to overcome these challenges in any way they can.

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