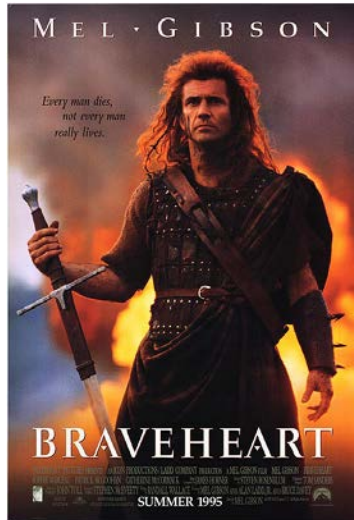


Mark Whelan's Movie Picks

Braveheart (1995) Director: Mel Gibson. 177m Rated: R



Mel Gibson's **Braveheart**, a brawny manifestation of swords and kilts, swept the 1995 Academy Awards and cemented the artistic integrity of its star/director.

Gibson encompasses his typically charming swagger as Scottish insurgent Sir William Wallace, a fabled historical figure who effectively assembled grassroots opposition from British rule in early fourteenth century Scotland. Orphaned by English garrisons, young Wallace is placed under his uncle's care (Brian Cox). A learned nobleman, Cox refines Wallace's mind and swordsmanship. Years later Wallace returns to his clan educated and worldly.

Initially a proponent of coexistence with the British, Wallace aims to settle and raise a family. However, the ruthless king of Britain--Edward "The Longshanks," played with steely understatement by Patrick McGoochan--initiates a doctrine delegating common Scotswomen to be held at mercy to any noble Englishman on the eve of their marriage, thus exterminating Scottish bloodlines through breeding. Wallace attempts to wed his childhood beloved (Catherine McCormick) in secret but is exposed and his new bride is put to death igniting a violent uprising. Through ferocity and nationalism, Wallace constructs a fervent comradeship of Scottish rebels in a campaign to eradicate British rule.



Extravagantly filmed on beautiful Scottish countryside (John Toll's radiant camerawork enriched by James Horner's stirring score) with marvelously staged battles (fiercely edited by Steven Rosenblum), Gibson tells the saga of his Scottish champion with robustness and conviction. Implementing the folklore and mythos of Sir William Wallace, **Braveheart** does not pretend to be historically precise, rather screenwriter Randal Wallace and Gibson have successfully fashioned an epic revealing the traditional traits of Hollywood romanticism and splendor.

Braveheart is magnificent and passionate cinematic storytelling at its finest with Gibson's labor of love evident in every shot.

--Mark Whelan, November 21, 2014