

THE PUBLIC

1h 19min | English



ALEC BALDWIN EMILIO ESTEVEZ JENA MALONE TAYLOR SCHILLING CHRISTIAN SLATER
GABRIELLE UNION JEFFREY WRIGHT MICHAEL K WILLIAMS CHE "RHYMEFEIST" SMITH JACOB VARGAS

SYNOPSIS

In "the public" an unusually bitter Arctic blast has made its way to downtown Cincinnati and the front doors of the public library where the action of the film takes place. The story revolves around the library patrons, many of whom are homeless, mentally ill and marginalized, as well as an exhausted and overwhelmed staff of librarians who often build emotional connections and a sense of obligation to care for those regular patrons. At odds with library officials over how to handle the extreme weather event, the Patrons turn the building into a homeless shelter for the night by staging an "Occupy" sit in. What begins as an act of civil disobedience becomes a stand off with police and a rush-to-judgment media constantly speculating about what's really happening. This David versus Goliath story tackles some of our nation's most challenging issues, homelessness and mental illness and sets the drama inside one of the last bastions of democracy-in-action: your public library.

ABOUT THE FILM...

bfi.org.uk

Emilio Estevez's *The Public* is, as they say, a 'well-intentioned' piece of work. Since writing, directing and starring in 1986's *Wisdom*, Estevez has jumped behind the camera sporadically, and here, wearing all three hats again, he turns to father Martin Sheen's native southwestern Ohio to make a movie that embodies something of the earnest, idealistic liberalism that dad made his stock-in-trade on seven seasons of *The West Wing*.

The film takes place largely in the confines of the downtown branch of the Cincinnati Public Library, its corridors and open spaces freely roamed by DP Juan Miguel Azpiroz's camera, covering the comings and goings of an ensemble cast that's like a scaled-down version of the kind Estevez put in motion in *Bobby* (2006). Estevez plays an ex-addict librarian who finds himself drawn to the centre of an Occupy-style sit-in staged at the library by homeless patrons, who refuse to leave at closing time for fear of being out on the street on the coldest night of the year.

The result of their protest is portrayed as a human triumph, though in fact the necessity of such a mend-and-make-do solution is an indictment of the system's failed infrastructure - the public library isn't the institution best equipped to serve as a shelter for the homeless, just as art isn't the vehicle best equipped to enact political action. (There is another outlet for that: it's called political action.)

Which is where the efficacy or even desirability of those good intentions comes into question. With all of its saintly-salty-streetwise panhandlers peacefully protesting, what *The Public* lacks is genuinely subversive spirit, a streak of true Buñuelian anarchy - the bad intentions that might actually make the mandarin classes shiver for their safety.



CAST

CHARACTER	ACTOR
Stuart Goodson	Emilio Estevez
Detective Bill Ramstead	Alec Baldwin
Crisis negotiator	Christian Slater
A librarian	Jena Malone

CREW

Director/Writer	Emilio Estevez
Cinematography	Juan Miguel Azpiroz
Film Editing	Richard Chew Yang Hua Hu

BOOKING

Distributor:
Parkland Entertainment

Non-theatrical bookings:
Troy Film Agency
troyfilmagency@btinternet
BFI_bookings.films@bfi.org.uk

Available: Now