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SURFING THE WAVES OF POPULAR CULTURE
BY MICHAEL GILTZ & FRIENDS

THURSDAY, MAY 18, 2006

Cannes Day Three

Quote of the day:

Ian McKellen at "The Da Vinco Code" press conference -- "I'm very happy to believe Jesus was married. I know the Catholic Church has problems with gay people and I thought this was absolutely proof that Jesus was not gay."

The Wind That Shakes The Barley *** 1/2

(Lumiere Theatre)

The first terrific film of the festival; received strong applause at the finale, especially for a film showing this early in the fest. It's a clear-eyed and very sad look at Ireland in the 20s when the Irish voted for independence, fought against the British troops but then its politicians signed a peace treaty that made no one happy and led to the partition and Irish killing Irish. Cillian Murphy is a young man heading off to London to work in a hospital. His brother Teddy is a fiery leader of the rebellion/resistance. We see the casual abuse and bullying by British troops (almost inevitable in such a situation). Cillian's train is delayed when the driver refuses to transport British soldiers and is beaten up. Cillian just can't leave and he joins up. We see their training, their fighting, ambushes, violence -- none of it is stirring or exciting; just necessary and brutal. One poor Irish lad reveals the location of rebels after the British threaten his mother and sister. Cillian is ordered to execute him in one of several very powerful scenes. It's simple, direct, dreadful. When the treaty is signed, Cillian's brother unexpectedly dons the uniform of the Irish. The endless debates about what to do, friends and lovers fighting over compromise versus brutal all-out war -- the film doesn't really take sides (though it's hardly in sympathy with the British; how could it be?). The movie just shows it and shakes its head sadly. At the end of the film, there is thankfully no scroll about what's happened since. it doesn't have the heart to detail 80 more years of misery.

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