

# Avoid Angela's Ashes film if the spirit is low

THE Limerick Leader's John O'Shaughnessy was the first journalist in Ireland to review Angela's Ashes, following a screening in Belfast last November.

This was his view of the film which opens in Limerick this evening.

This dark, harsh and brooding two and a half hour movie—three funerals in the opening half-hour—generally stays faithful to the book and nothing is left to the imagination as Limerick of the period and the McCourt family bare their souls.

There are very few moments of light relief, apart from Frank's first visit to the Confessional, and his days at Leamy's, to deflect from Limerick, seen as a forbidding sort of place, poverty stricken under the thumb of the Church and where the rain never stops.

That's the way it was, we were told, and that's the way it is presented.

Parker and screenwriter Laura Jones focus on the more conventionally dramatic elements of McCourt's life story.

It was one thing to read of Frank McCourt's miserable childhood spent in the lanes and slums of Limerick but to see it on screen is not pretty.

The laneways are depicted as hovels, something out of the dark ages and the mainly uneducated people living in deplorable conditions.

Alan Parker really drives the McCourt message home in a film not short in detail and that makes for rather heavy going.

That said, the film is a triumph for Parker, the cast and casting

directors John and Ross Hubbard, whose months searching for talent have reaped dividends with some brilliant performances from Joe Breen as young Frank, Ciaran Owens as middle Frank, Michael Legge as older Frank, as well as Shane Murray Corcoran, Devon Murray and Mungret's Peter Halpin in the roles of Malachy.

Robert Carlyle and Emily Watson, as dad and Angela, are excellent.

It opens in Brooklyn in 1935 with the birth of Margaret Mary, Malachy and Angela McCourt.

It then switches to the family's return to Limerick and ends with Frank arriving in New York on the Irish Oak.

There are not too many Limerick locations which are instantly recognisable—brief glimpses of Clancy's Strand, Thomond Bridge, Quinn Street and The Crescent—and if you go along hoping to see familiar faces, or perhaps to see yourself as an extra, you are likely to be very disappointed.

John Murphy of the Irish Theatre Company has a minor role, as has John Kenny of d'Unbelievables.

Angela's Ashes, which had a budget of around £25 million, makes for a fantastic piece of cinema.

Sure, it is depressing, sad, tragic, moving and very Dickensian, but it remains a story well told. I have no doubt that opinions will be divided.

What I will say is, if you are feeling in any way depressed, delay seeing it until you are in better frame of mind.

Either way, go along and see it and make up your own mind.

Because of nudity, sexual content and some bad language, it has been granted an over 15s cert.



Christy Humphries receiving first prize from John Tobin of the Track Bcr, main sponsor of the Joe Bennis memorial golf tournament, with Christy Kirwan, organiser



Participants in the fourth annual Joe Bennis memorial golf tournament which raised £500 for Milford Hospice