

# Fairhaven (The Movie) Review



by  
Marilyn  
Watts

Last winter my brother Doug and I decided to answer an open casting call for extras in a movie filmed in Fairhaven and, for a lark, we ventured down to the Zeiterion Theatre on a cold January night. We were pleasantly surprised when we got called in as extras. Doug was cast in the funeral scene and I was cast as a grocery shopper. Recently, we had the pleasure of attending the Independent Film Festival in Boston to see the completed film, Fairhaven (the Movie), which had just come from its premiere at the Tribeca Film Festival in New York. What a beautiful film it is!

The film revolves around three men in their mid-30's who were childhood friends and reconnect in their hometown of Fairhaven, Massachusetts for the funeral of one of their fathers.



A scene shot at Fairhaven High School.

Tom O'Brien is the multi-talented writer, director and actor

in Fairhaven (the movie) and actor Chris Messina, who plays Dave, the dark, dangerous bad boy, collaborated with Tom on the script. Dave fled Fairhaven right after high school, and lost touch with his former friends while running clubs in Vegas. Jon, Tom's character, is the former college quarterback who has aspirations to be a writer, but has been working on fishing boats while pondering his life's purpose. Rich Sommer rounds out the threesome as Sam, the sweet, divorced single father who stayed in his hometown and works hard as a realtor to keep it together, while still harboring feelings for his former wife, Kate, played beautifully and soulfully by Sarah Paulsen.

The town of Fairhaven is another character in the movie. From the opening shot of fishing boats in the New Bedford Harbor to "the fort" scenes, Margarets, the Congregational church, town hall, Cap Log and Fairhaven High, O'Brien shined a light on the beauty of our town with his poignant script. Cinematographer, Peter Simonite, who is from Texas, was impressed with the light here in Buzzards Bay and really showed off the breathtaking beauty of the Southcoast. The unexpected heavy snowfall only added to nature's beauty. Tom was said to have pictured the film made in the fall season with football and colorful leaves as backdrop, but about two feet of snow dropped on the first day of shooting. He now says that he can't imagine the film in any other season.

The film explores our search for happiness while revisiting the past and looking to the future. A running theme throughout the movie is a Tom Brady quote that disturbs Jon. After winning three superbowl's and marrying a supermodel, Tom was quoted as saying, "Is this all there is?" Sensitive, Jon discusses this with each of his friends, while searching for his next step in life. Each character carries his own baggage, and over the course of the weekend these friends reconnect and try to sort out their own lives and friendships. Although the dialog is excellent, these characters portray so much emotion

and passion with their expressions and body language than any dialog could portray.



Scene shot at Lincoln Park.

There is a scene toward the end of the movie where Dave is walking in the snow and sits on a rock in front of the old roller coaster at Lincoln Park, now abandoned and in ruins. Those of us who grew up in this area have fond memories of Lincoln Park where we spent endless hours on rides at the amusement park, roller skating at the pavilion, and as teenagers, attending dances in the ballroom. I always feel wistful as I drive past the old abandoned park and this symbolic scene was the perfect metaphor. Three aging men are looking back on their youth, dealing with the death of a parent and wondering where their future will take them.

The audience at the film festival was enthralled with the movie and broke into applause at the end. I recently read that Fairhaven won the Audience Appreciation Award. At a question and answer session at the end of the film, I thanked Tom for his beautiful movie and mentioned that Fairhaven celebrates 200 years this year, and would be a perfect time to share his film with the locals. He mentioned that he was working on a possible showing at the Zeiterion Theatre this summer. This is a film you do not want to miss! And even though my scene was cut in the movie and my name was mis-spelled in the credits, all is forgiven as I have fallen in love with this movie. And if you get the opportunity, I know you will too!

## Fairhaven (The Movie) Trailer