

Sound of Metal: A world of lies about cochlear implants

The American Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences has announced the Oscar nominations to be awarded on April 26th of this year.

The film "Sound of Metal" has six nominations. It's about a musician who goes deaf.

As a person with a cochlear implant (the theme of the film) I must state that these nominations are well-deserved, except that for original script.

Why?

Darius Marder and Abraham Marder, the director and screenwriter of this film, are unfortunately inclined to favour the signing deaf community.

The film takes place in the US, where I have read news such as that there, signing deaf parents prefer to have a deaf son to a hearing one, and even take an interest in genetic manipulation to achieve it.

I don't want to reveal spoilers, but there are scenes that hit my heart.

The lack of empathy shown in the film towards a person, more significantly a musician, who wants to regain hearing after falling deaf, is mind-blowing.

The protagonist, a drug addict, becomes deaf and arrives in a community run by a former Vietnam fighter who was deafened by a bombing. This character welcomes the protagonist to "help" him on his way to accepting deafness.

The musician only dreams of listening again, but his environment only provides him with the tools to function in sign language and just accept his new reality.

However, the protagonist is operated on and then, while he is convalescing and awaiting implant activation, he returns to the signing community. He explains his decision and asks to be allowed to stay in the community while the months of healing pass and then leave when it is time to have his cochlear implant activated.

The signing community deny his request, because he has decided "not to be deaf", and chosen other ways to go on his life with his disability. That is not true. **A C.I. user is still a deaf person! Does the screenwriter really understand the world of cochlear implants?**

EURO-CIU is a non-governmental and non-profit association, established in Luxembourg in 1995. The association consist of 33 national member associations from 23 European countries and has 6 corresponding members. Altogether, EURO-CIU represents around 220.000 cochlear implant (CI) users across Europe. Registration number: RCS F3180



Can we really believe that a musician will readily give up hearing again because he has discovered a new world of silence that is far more welcoming than the worldly noise?

I think it sends a damaging message to deaf people who choose to embrace new technologies to alleviate a disability which isolates people and prevents them from enjoying the sounds of the world.

I know very well that among deaf people there are two opposing sides, and that unfortunately although we are grouped together, our needs are totally different. Some of us want to integrate into the listening world, and some choose to live in a world of silence and communicate with sign language.

Everyone is free to choose, but not to exclude those who do not think like them. Cochlear implants are still not well known, so its disclosure must be realistic and true.

I have also seen an episode of the "**New Amsterdam**" TV show in which a deaf patient decides to say, after having a cochlear implant, that it does not work well for her and wants it removed. She is not comfortable in the noisy world and is nostalgic for her world of silence. I think it is her right to decide how she is most comfortable. Nevertheless, we watch the show come up with a new lie that millions of people will believe: the doctor tells her not to worry, that they will remove the implant and return her to her old world. He also not mentions that the operation is dangerous, since removing the implant carries a risk!



Cochlear implants have one part implanted inside the cochlea and an external part (like a hearing aid) that connects to the inside by a magnet. If you do not have this external part connected, you hear nothing. So why do they give this message that they must intervene again to remove the implant and that it is a risk, to satisfy the patient? She could just remove the external device if she feels that strongly about the silence.

These films and shows should be careful with these topics, as they convey a dangerous message about deafness, which thanks to advances can now be overcome. With a truthful and accurate message, they could give valuable information that would help the deaf to decide without lies or pressure the way of life they prefer. We shouldn't deny anyone the enjoyment of all five senses. **The world is noisy, sometimes environmental noises bother, but that's it... the world!**

I'll be on the look out to see whether the Oscar for Best Screenplay goes to a half-truth story, which normalizes the rejection of those who want to regain hearing.

Silvia Lazausa, Cochlear Implant User.

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