

FILM

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Zachary Knighton (left), one of the stars of *Believe Me* (2014)



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Who do you believe?



Believe Me (2014) M

Starring: Alex Russell, Zachary Knighton, Johanna Braddy
Written by: Will Bakke
Directed by: Will Bakke

This is a very interesting 'Christian' film from the people who brought us the USA based documentaries: One Nation Under God and the intriguingly titled Beware of Christians. It is their first venture into feature film territory, but the themes of what does it mean to be a 'real Christian' and how should we live in God's world today are still at the centre.

Like secular films Leap of Faith (reviewed in ACC Catalyst December 2013) and Pray TV this examines the question of sincerity and belief in Christian organisations especially those that raise money for causes. I well remember a scene in

one film about televangelists in the USA. The preacher looked straight into the camera and exclaimed – "I don't need your money – God needs your money", and then the number for the donation line comes up.

There are a number of lesser-known but professional actors playing the major parts, with Australian actor Alex Russell playing Sam, who needs to raise money urgently to pay his student fees so he can graduate. He enlists the help of three friends and together they learn the ways of the 'Christian preacher' and found a charity and then basically con their audiences as they travel around the USA and also meet 'real Christians and groups'. This film actually draws you in as you watch them debate and internally struggle with what they are doing. As a viewer I wanted to see how it would all end.

Along the way, there is ongoing satire, as Christian behaviour and perhaps idiosyncrasies are considered, perhaps in a way like a visual version of Christian satirical magazine and website The Wittenberg Door. It is helpful to have the

spotlight on our perceived behaviour in this day and age of visual connection and instant judgement to help us reflect.

I found this a sobering comment in a simple and yet dramatic way. It left me wondering if for many people, there is really that fine a line between a charlatan and a charismatic leader?

Peter Bentley is the National Director of the ACC.

Would you like a copy of Believe Me on DVD? ACC has copies available for the first 2 readers who post a comment on the ACC website about this review or provide a letter to the editor.