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Three cheers?

I recently watched three very different films; a Canadian Indie type feature, a Danish film with well-known Danish actors, including Mads Mikkelsen, and an Australian documentary by comedian and television presenter Shaun Micallef.

What each has in common was theme of alcohol consumption and its impact on the lives of those around us.



The Grizzlies (2018/2020, M for coarse language and suicide themes)

This film is having a limited release in Australia in March and is a wonderful look at the true story of the formation of a lacrosse team, created from a group of high school students in a town that had little hope and tragically a high suicide rate. [For a helpful film and resources to help prevent suicide see [The Girl on the Bridge Film | October 2020](#)]

Alcohol was the prime destroyer of the community, from the parents to the children. Drugs as well, but in this community, alcohol was the common drug of oblivion. To paraphrase what someone in the movie says ‘what else is there to do but drink’.

A new teacher Russ Sheppard the teacher, has his first appointment in Kugluktuk, Nanavut in the Canadian Arctic. He decides to use his passion for lacrosse to connect with the students and to enter them in a competition. This is not a fairy tale story, but a hard-living, rough-edged look at what life is in communities without hope, and what can happen when hope is provided. While not a Christian focussed/faith film, the message is one that is consistent with many Christian endeavours that seek to have people reconsider their life and look to a better way.

The film made in Iqaluit had a cast that was 90 percent Inuit or Indigenous, as well as one-third of the crew. Professional actor Ben Schnetzer plays Russ Sheppard the teacher, and we learn that his thought of 'one year' became seven years. I appreciated his reflection: "It can't be trivialized to any type of hero," he said. "And, in fact, I feel like I learned a lot more from my students than I ever taught them."

Another Round (2020, M for mature themes and coarse language)

Billed as a comedy drama, this film is probably one of the most depressing comedies I have seen. The director Thomas Vinterberg is one of the founders of the Dogme 95 movement (a movement based around the idea of going back to the basics or simple focus of movies, with an emphasis on story and acting). As well as his Dogme films Vinterberg has made a number of interesting and more commercially critical films, including the very challenging film *The Hunt*, also starring Mads Mikkelsen.

In *Another Round*, four friends, all teachers at a Danish gymnasium (an upper level secondary academy with a focus on preparing students for further study), decide to personally evaluate a theory by a Norwegian academic that our normal human blood alcohol level is too low and should be around 0.05%; that is, this level of alcohol should be maintained in the blood. The idea is that with this level, one will be more fun and life more fun. The experiment varies from the initial level to that approaching what would be regarded as dead drunk. The story includes secretly drinking at the academy, and in fact drinking anywhere one can except after 8.00 PM.

I had no idea that under-age drinking was so socially acceptable in Denmark and that graduation culminated in binge activity to make any schoolies time pale by comparison. The issues that abound from excessive drinking are all on display here; marital and family problems, abuse, depression, job difficulties; a relative laugh fest only for someone who is so inebriated they cannot see the significance of the issues at their hand.

While there are some glimmers of change and possibilities for a new life for some of the characters, the freeze frame scene at the end made me wonder if the whole film had symbolically jumped off the deep end.

Shaun Micallef's On The Sauce (2020)

This illuminating three part documentary considers the past, present and perhaps future of drinking in Australia. There are a number of sad stories, from Micallef himself, and from alcoholics explaining their difficulties, medical treatment and family history. The pastime of casual drinking that has increased into binge drinking is considered in the context of the seemingly engrained need by some to drink. I was reminded of Proverbs 23, Saying 19 and the last part, "When will I wake up so I can find another drink?" (Proverbs 23: 35b).

This is a documentary series that helps one to think about the wide-ranging impact that a seemingly social activity can have on our own lives and in our communities.

Three cheers? Well, only two cheers from me.

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