



ABCD Online no. 9

July 2021

The Angels' Share

UK, France, Belgium, Italy 2012 100mins Cert 18

While doing community service, Glaswegian young offender Robbie, played by Paul Brannigan (a former prison inmate), is mentored by a whisky-loving social worker (John Henshaw) and discovers he has a nose for single malts. Worried that he is trapped in a cycle of poverty and violence, Robbie thinks he sees a way to make a fortune with a crime related to his new-found opportunity, *Uisge Beatha*, the Water of Life.

Though known for social realism and political acerbity, throughout his career Ken Loach has occasionally shown a whimsical, Ealing comedy streak. This is a film of two halves, representing both aspects of Loach's cinema. The change of tack leaves some of its threads open-ended and asks audiences to bear with a protagonist who is set up as a conflicted, desperate-to-change NED who never quite becomes likeable enough to carry off a comedy caper.

Trapped by his short-fuse temper and unable to get away from a life of random hooliganism and street feuds, Robbie seethes through excruciating, believable early scenes. This section is so strong that it's slightly disorienting when the issues raised are set aside and the film embraces funnier business as Robbie and an ill-assorted crew of fellow community service offenders set out to heist a valuable barrel of aged single malt whisky and set themselves up for life.

With spot-on supporting performances from Gary Maitland as the dimmest of the roughneck offenders (who still has one blindingly brilliant idea about the best disguise for Glaswegians in the Highlands) and Roger Allam as a smooth operator in the illicit collectors' whisky market, coupled to a nice selection of absurdist deadpan gags (including one jackass-style gross-out you wouldn't expect from Loach), this has something of the feel of an early Bill Forsyth.

Acknowledgments: Kim Newman, *empireonline.com*

"This being a Loach/Laverty movie, audiences aren't allowed to walk away without a [...] treatise on how poverty ravages the soul and prejudice against the dispossessed only leads to an endless cycle of crime.

As is so often the case with Loach, the naturalistic, semi-improvised performances [are] utterly convinc[ing]" Leslie Felperin, *Variety*

Leading Players

Paul Brannigan	Robbie
Gary Maitland	Albert
William Ruane	Rhino
James Casey	Dougie
Siobhan Reilly	Leonie

Production Credits

Director	Ken Loach
Producers	Rebecca O'Brien, V Maraval, P Caucheteux, P Gallagher
Screenplay	Paul Laverty
Cinematography	Robbie Ryan
Original Music	George Fenton

Zoom discussion meeting to take place
Thursday July 29th from 7.30pm to 8.15pm

Link:

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/77703529553?pwd=UWQvSTQzWnRFUVJTSDR2dkZWNVWQT09>

Meeting ID: 777 0352 9553

Passcode: kTcMM6



ABCD Film Society Online

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