

# The Angels' Share



©eOne Films

**DIRECTED BY:** Ken Loach

**CERTIFICATE:** 15

**RUNNING TIME:** 97 mins

**COUNTRY:** UK

**YEAR:** 2012

**KEYWORDS:** British film, UK film policy, film education, Ken Loach, redemption, youth crime

**SUITABLE FOR:** 14–19 media/film studies, P4C and politics

## SYNOPSIS

Robbie is a young Glaswegian man going nowhere in life. Though he has a pregnant girlfriend to support, he has no job, he's living on a friend's floor and he is committed to doing community service after he assaulted another man. It doesn't help that his girlfriend's father is a gangland boss and that many other criminals are threatening his life. But when Robbie is introduced to the world of the malt whiskey connoisseur by his community service officer, he not only finds a brief respite from his life but stumbles upon an opportunity to steal a barrel of rare whiskey that could be worth over a million pounds...an act that could change his life forever – one way or the other.

## BEFORE VIEWING

### UK FILM POLICY: HOW HAS IT AFFECTED YOU AS A MOVIE FAN?

*The Angels' Share* is partly financed by the British Film Institute. Carrying on the work of the UK Film Council, the BFI allocates lottery funds to an array of British Film projects.<sup>1</sup> This spells good news for the British Film Industry, as does the government's recent policy review of film funding in the UK. However, in January 2012 the Prime Minister stated that '...the film industry should support "commercially successful pictures."' <sup>2</sup>

Read through this webpage from the BBC: [www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-16495095](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-16495095)

- What problems can you see with the Prime Minister's statement? Think about the process of a film's development.
- How did filmmakers react to the PM's statement?
- What examples of commercially successful British pictures can you think of from the last few years?

Not long after the Prime Minister's comments, a report and review of British Film Policy<sup>3</sup> was published with aims that the BFI and filmmakers were generally happy with.

Read through this webpage from the BBC: [www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-16575204](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-16575204) (accessed 30/ix/12)

- How have the BFI and UK film directors responded to the government's recommendations?
- The article notes that the report proposes 'A new anti-piracy law and film education in schools...film clubs, festivals, pop-ups, rural community venues or digitally equipped modern cinemas...to give more opportunities to see movies, especially outside of London'. Have you noticed a difference around your school, community and local cinema when it comes to film-watching or cinema-going opportunities?
- How might future plans for film affect you? What exciting new film opportunities would you like to take advantage of?

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-12924307> (accessed 30/ix/12)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-16495095> (accessed 30/ix/12)

<sup>3</sup> The complete report can be viewed as a PDF here: [http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/publications/DCMS\\_film\\_policy\\_review\\_report-2012\\_update.pdf](http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/publications/DCMS_film_policy_review_report-2012_update.pdf) (accessed 30/ix/12)

## AFTER VIEWING

### A KEN LOACH FILM?

For a long while, Ken Loach had a reputation for being a 'miserabilist', for creating films that were downbeat and concerned struggling working-class characters. However, recently there has been a noticeable shift. With *Looking For Eric* (2009) and now *The Angels' Share* he has begun to display a comic edge. To what extent is *The Angels' Share* recognisable as a Ken Loach film? Can you identify the following Ken Loach conventions in the film?

- naturalistic performances
- regional dialects
- northern/Scottish setting
- social commentary
- working-class characters and milieu
- challenging subject matter
- on-location shooting
- screenplay by Paul Laverty

Look at the trailers for some of Loach's other films, particularly *Sweet Sixteen* (2002), *Ae Fond Kiss* (2004) and *Looking For Eric* (2009). What other identifiable Loach touches can you spot?

### BALANCING COMEDY AND DRAMA

Reviewers have noted that Loach tries to balance very serious drama and very funny comedy in *The Angels' Share*. The themes stretch from serious, confrontational social issues right to gross-out humour.

- How does Loach handle the following swings in tone? Consider performances, mise en scène, editing and the placing of the sequences in the narrative:

- Robbie's beating at the hospital
- Robbie's pal drinking the jug of 'whiskey'
- Robbie being confronted by his victim and his family
- Robbie's 'chat' with Leonie's Dad
- the trip up to the highlands
- the theft of the whiskey
- the whiskey bottles breaking

- Pay particular attention to the scene where Robbie meets his victim.

- What editing methods are used to suggest the seriousness of the crime?
- Which character or characters do you sympathise with in the scene?
- Does the scene fit within the narrative framework of a 'comedy caper'?

- Look at the promotional material for the film, particularly the DVD covers, posters and trailer.

- Which other films are referenced in the material?
- Do the materials make the film seem more like a comedy or drama or are both genres covered?
- Now you've seen the film, do you feel the promotional materials truly reflect the content of the film? How could you position the marketing campaign differently?



## REPRESENTATIONS

A variety of social groups and institutions are represented in *The Angels' Share*. The themes in the film also reflect many concerns of people living in Britain today such as youth crime, rehabilitation and violence.

What positive and negative aspects of the following character types are put forward in the film? Remember, the absence of representation is just as important as what is shown:

- young men
- young women
- the working class
- the middle class
- the police
- community service officers
- violent offenders
- victims of crime
- mothers
- fathers
- the Scottish
- NEDS (you may need to look up this term!)

With all that you have investigated, what does the film say about young offenders who wish to rehabilitate?

## ACTIVITIES (PRACTICAL)

Using images from the film or your own photos, produce a poster for this film that gives the impression it is a drama rather than a comedy.

Try this genre switching for poster campaigns for other films of your choice. How easy or difficult is it to switch tone between different genres?



## SUCCESS OF THE ANGELS' SHARE

Look at the release dates and figures of the variety of British films below (which includes some other Ken Loach films). How did *The Angel's Share*'s box-office figures compare? Is there a pattern when it comes to release dates? How does this film compare to other even more recent Loach films?

Find more information at the Film Distributors' Association website: <http://www.launchingfilms.com/>

Film	Distributor	Release	Box Office	Opening	Screens	Screen Ave.
East Is East	FilmFour	5 <sup>th</sup> Nov 1999	10,374,926	435,627	80	5,445
The Wind That Shakes The Barley	Pathé	23 <sup>rd</sup> June 2006	3,906,765	390,720	105	3,721
Mike Bassett: England Manager	EFD	28 <sup>th</sup> Sept 2001	3,586,492	835,219	264	3,164
Brassed Off	FilmFour	1 <sup>st</sup> Nov 1996	3,388,319	466,058	203	2,296
Kinky Boots	BVI	7 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2005	3,028,257	623,123	292	2,134
Vera Drake	Momentum	7 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2005	2,377,998	266,010	65	4,092
Secrets & Lies	FilmFour	24 <sup>th</sup> May 2006	1,969,910	123,929	17	7,290
Fever Pitch	FilmFour	4 <sup>th</sup> April 1997	1,863,141	470,013	224	2,098
Venus	BVI	26 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2007	1,273,873	317,426	196	1,628
Happy-Go-Lucky	Momentum	18 <sup>th</sup> April 2008	1,085,089	385,190	77	5,002
My Name Is Joe	FilmFour	6 <sup>th</sup> Nov 1998	949,228	101,083	20	5,054
Sweet Sixteen	Icon	4 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2002	852,178	144,388	66	2,188
Enduring Love	Pathé	26 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2004	710,054	165,338	69	2,396
Starter For 10	Icon	10 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2006	628,661	207,345	84	2,468
Ae Fond Kiss	Icon	17 <sup>th</sup> Sept 2004	456,362	106,366	62	1,716
There's Only One Jimmy Grimble	Pathé	25 <sup>th</sup> August 2000	355,023	101,282	127	797
Carla's Song	Universal	31 <sup>st</sup> Jan 1997	326,480	71,968	42	1,714
Bread and Roses	FilmFour	27 <sup>th</sup> April 2001	223,574	53,906	26	2,073
Heartlands	BVI	2 <sup>nd</sup> May 2003	72,228	26,493	31	855
Once In A Lifetime	Pathé	19 <sup>th</sup> May 2006	35,783	13,947	22	634
The Navigators	BFI	2 <sup>nd</sup> Nov 2001	9,238	929	3	310

Written by Gareth C Evans