



SALT IN MY SOUL -- A Bright Light Shining in the Dark

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Review by Dan Skip Allen



Documentaries are a way into the lives and subject matters of the subject that is being depicted or the topic that is being discussed. Sometimes the subject or topic is that of someone or something we know about and other times it's not. *Salt In My Soul* is one of the latter. Mallory Smith is the subject of the film based on her diary, which, in turn, inspired the book of the same name.

Mallory Smith was diagnosed with cystic fibrosis as a three-year-old child. Her whole life she has dealt with hospital visits, medical treatments, and coughing fits. For all the fun she had doing hula dances, swimming in the ocean, playing volleyball or water polo, she also had times of difficult medical illnesses due to the B. cepacia. Despite her illness, she burned bright like a light at times in high school and college. She writes everything down in her diary though.

Will Battersby, the director, and April Merl, the editor, take a pretty straightforward approach to this documentary. Like a lot of documentaries, there are a lot of talking heads. This film also has quite a bit of archival footage of Mallory growing up as a kid, playing in the ocean, playing athletic events, and living her life as a high school and college student. Some script-to-screen aspects are also littered throughout the film. That's another way for the viewer to get what the subject of the film is trying to express.



The film also uses Mallory Smith as the narrator of her life. Her voiceover of the film brings her story to the forefront much better, using various ways to express herself is a way for us to understand where she's coming from. It's a very effective way to help get this tragic story across to those watching the film. She really did live a whole life despite the illness of B. cepacia and the diagnosis of cystic fibrosis.

The film has a lot of dialogue about medical jargon, but it is broken up by the dialogue from excerpts of Mallory narrating her story. The talking heads of her fellow college students, doctors, and family members bring the story full circle. It's a life that any young woman could want. Even finding love and friendship was a solace to take her mind off of her fateful diagnosis. It was hard on everybody involved. I have a friend that was going through the same thing with his nephew. They, like all families, have taken it hard.

These slices of life stories are very interesting because they tell good stories about good people. Mallory Smith's life was lived very well and the film depicts that very effectively. Even though it's pretty straightforward, it still hits home how this woman and her family have fought so hard. Many people have family members with illnesses such as this, so the film is very relatable on that level. She was dealt a pretty bad hand, but she made the most of the life she had while she had it.

Salt in My Soul hits theaters on January 21 and VOD on January 25.

Rating: 4/5