

for Jason Wise's next passionate and sensitive film about the world of wine and the remarkable people who seem to inhabit it.

Robert N. Stavins
John F. Kennedy School of Government Harvard University
robert_stavins@harvard.edu
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DINA MANDE (Director): *Tin City*. Written by Dina Mande. Gravitas, 2019; made available through hoopla, 1 h 19 min.

Can artisanal wine be made in an industrial park? Why would anyone want to do so when most wine lovers might not want to associate tin buildings as part of the terroir where the wine is produced? In her documentary film *Tin City*, Dina Meade illustrates how a thriving community of passionate, hard-working individuals has come to produce world class wine, spirits, and beer in Paso Robles, California. While Paso Robles has a well-known and rapidly expanding wine scene, few are familiar with the existence of a neighborhood of winemakers who share ideas, equipment, and clientele within a 20-acre industrial park of buildings on cul-de-sacs. *Tin City* explores this new wine scene development of a community of unpretentious passionate individuals who have a great appreciation for soil, climate, and grape varieties of the Paso region. They want to create unique products using their own skills and techniques, not in large, highly capitalized wineries, breweries, and distilleries but rather in this village of tin buildings called Tin City outside of downtown.

This documentary is based on interviews of the working people of the Tin City community and explores how and why they became involved within their craft. It is divided into six sections entitled: Career Changes and Cellar Rats, The Vineyard, The Community, The Landlord, Paso-Then and Now, and Where We've Come and Where We Will Go. While each person interviewed represents a separate individual business enterprise, they display a great communal enthusiasm, enjoyment of their work, and feeling of camaraderie. The editing is very smooth and professional; however, it might have been helpful to change the sequence of the sections or introduce the concept of artisanal work done in an industrial park as a business and community model earlier on in the film.

A passion for creating something of their own, a willingness to work hard, and the desire to share with others is a common trait among the dozen or so people interviewed, yet their backgrounds differ widely. In the Career Changes and Cellar Rats section, the viewer meets seven business owners. Most of the owners wear many hats and also work as growers and producers, and salespeople as the businesses are comparatively small, although the actual number of employees at each operation is not clear. In the Vineyard Section, we hear of the need for appropriate site selection, the great value of the rocky well drained soil, the use of appropriate farming techniques, and other factors. The viewer should be prepared for some of the marketing hype that the owners occasionally spout since some of these claimed factors are not universally accepted. The Community section shows how non-competitive interaction, idea exchange, and equipment sharing have thrived in this small community and contributed to its success.

It is not until one gets to The Landlord section, 55 minutes into the film, that the viewer meets Mike, the businessman and developer of Tin City. He is described as the "Fun Uncle," and a guy with a passion for quality and like-minded people. He gets input from the current business owners as to whether prospective Tin City business applicants would "fit in" the community. As prospective tenants applied to move into the village, his vision for Tin City appears to have evolved to one of a sharing community. The first occupant, which has served as the anchor of the community given its somewhat larger size, was a craft brewery. The grand vision of Mike appears to be that of supporting a village of artisans that will include restaurants and other food related entities within the city of Paso Robles. The emphasis of his vision is on that of a local market with world class offerings.

The two final sections (Paso-Then and Now and Where We've Come and Where We Will Go) are of interest since they indicate how Tin City fits in the big picture of the Paso region—one of the fastest growing wine regions in California. Here one sees that the facilities of Tin City are not only just home to startup companies as one owner suggested that "the sky is the limit" with doubling and tripling of production capacity expected soon. Yes, this documentary is a bit commercial and can be used by the City of Paso to attract tourists who want an alternative to other famous regions like Napa, but it is not done crassly or exploitatively.

Given that the inability to actually taste the wine is an important factor in a documentary largely about wine making, the viewer is instead treated to excellent cinematography and soundtrack. The cinematography is that of luscious close-up shots and videos of vineyard and wine production. If you have worked in a vineyard or winery, you would enjoy the beautiful photography of the fruit of the vine, the wine sloshing in glass, and the tools of the trade. Lots of clean, sanitary facilities and hard-working hands are shown. You do not see fancy tasting rooms, in fact, one owner indicated that his entire winery tour could be done in a few minutes since the production, aging, storage, and tasting room are in proximity. The soundtrack is composed of snippets of a variety of music from simple ballads to classical fare. The music is pleasant and unobtrusive.

Tin City is a documentary worth seeing, especially if you are interested in the relatively new concept of artisanal products, especially wine, beer, and distilled spirits created in an industrial setting. The film is joyful and experiential and not academic or filled with facts or figures. The only figure shown is a map of California indicating where Paso Robles is located relative to San Francisco and Los Angeles. The village of Tin City is unique. It is not an incubator park like that in Walla Walla, Washington, which supports a few fledgling wineries for up to six years. In Tin City, tenants can stay as long as they are successful enough to afford the rent, and they receive no significant start-up financial support from the local government.

The emphasis in *Tin City* is on the fun in winemaking. *Tin City* may not be considered groundbreaking such as the documentary *Mondovino* (2012) with its exploration of the industrialization and globalization of the world of wine. In fact, in many ways, it is antithetical to that film in that it extols the virtues of local craftsmanship. One does not meet the movers and shakers of the wine world, rather just passionate individuals willing to take risks to fulfill their dreams. This is not a film for those who approach wine with the goal of enhancing their wine cellar, wine snobism, or pretense. Nor does the film identify specific wine styles or grape varieties that can be associated with Tin City or Paso Robles. There are virtually no rules: anything goes. Neither is this a documentary on how to start a wine business. If you want to understand how people without extraordinary financial resources can be successful and have fun making wine, this will be an enjoyable film to watch. Are you going to Paso Robles? Definitely see this film! Are you restricted in travel but like to do a virtual behind the scenes winery, brewery, or distillery visit in a unique setting—see this film! You will share in the fun.

Lawrence Coia

Outer Coastal Plain Vineyard Association, New Jersey

njwineman@comcast.net

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