

Missoulian

Prepare yourself for 'Montana Meth': HBO film is a terrifying look at a lethal drug

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With her finger, she flicks a syringe that's a third filled with meth, shaking the bubbles out. There is no hesitation when she sticks the syringe in her neck.

The concoction enters her bloodstream, and there is silence. She closes her eyes and shuts down. Slowly, her eyes open.

"Right now, I feel better than any sober person will ever feel their entire lives," she says to the camera. "And that's what nobody tells you."

She's a 16-year-old girl from Kalispell, and she performed this little drug ritual in a hotel room as Eames Yates' camera rolled.

The newsman and documentary filmmaker's sobering anti-drug film, "Montana Meth," is a fright to watch - and will certainly be among the most talked-about films at next weekend's Big Sky Documentary Film Festival. It's terrifying and gruesome, putting a sick - and disturbingly young - face on an issue that's made headlines in this state for years. Watching it, you're forced to consider: Right now, there are Montana kids doing the same thing to their bodies and minds and futures.

"This is about young people who have yet to be corrupted and yet are corrupted and wiped out for trying it just once," said Yates, who has done other films on drug abuse, including "Crank: Made in America." "It was difficult, hard and uncomfortable. I thought it was very sad seeing what I thought were smart, normal kids being on a total wipe out."

"Montana Meth" is an HBO documentary, part of the cable network's upcoming addiction series. Next weekend, it will get its world premiere in a free showing at the Wilma, as the Big Sky Documentary Film Festival kicks off. The gritty, hourlong documentary is an anti-drug effort fully funded by Tom Siebel's Montana Meth Project, the creator of the meth-scare commercials that anyone with a television or a radio knows well by now.

Yates and his crew traveled to Montana in late 2005 and stayed the winter in places like Great Falls, Kalispell, Bozeman and the Crow Indian Reservation, documenting through interviews with meth addicts, former addicts, school and tribal administrators and law enforcement.

But it's with the addicts - and Yates found many of them, as young as 15 - that "Montana Meth" has its teeth. Or, in one Montana inmate's case that will make you squirm, a LACK of teeth.

"I think that this film is a no-holds-barred look at what meth is," said Yates. "It's not shined or waxed or slickly edited, it's straight up - and it says volumes."

'Montana Meth' world premiere

The public is invited for a free screening of the upcoming documentary "Montana Meth" at the Wilma Theatre next Thursday evening, Feb. 15, at 6:30 p.m. The screening, which kicks off the Big Sky Documentary Film Festival, is made possible by sponsorship from HBO. Director and co-producer Eames Yates will address the crowd after the documentary.

In next week's Entertainer

We'll have complete coverage of the Big Sky Documentary Film Festival, including movie previews and reviews, synopses and schedules.

In next week's Missoulian

A complete story about "Montana Meth," including a lengthy interview with filmmaker Eames Yates and a review of the documentary.