



## Slamdance Review: Dear Zachary: a letter to a son about his father

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I don't know how to review this film. It's so personal, so emotional and so powerful that if I dedicate a paragraph to a few technical issues, it would completely take away from the fact that this was one of the best documentaries I have ever watched in my entire life. Following the Slamdance premiere of [Dear Zachary](#), I asked my friend if the director had also submitted to Sundance. Apparently, he did. How or why Sundance did not accept this doc is beyond me. And here's a note to any programmer from any fest reading this review: Play this film. And here's a note to anyone looking to purchase a doc to distribute and whatnot: Buy this film. I don't work for a studio, thus I'm not keen on all the politics involved, but I guarantee if this doc was picked up by, say, HBO, it would change lives immediately.

Matt Dentler made a good point over on his blog. While briefly talking about the film, he said, "I'm not going to link its Web site for a reason: this is a documentary you need to experience with as little advanced knowledge as possible. You just need to know it's worth seeing, and will probably grip you tight from the very beginning. But, like so many festival films, it hits you hardest when you go into it knowing very little." And I completely agree, which is why I won't go into too many details after the jump.

It's a story you'd expect to find on an episode of *Dateline*: A well-liked doctor-in-training, Andrew Bagby, is murdered near his home. Following the murder, writer-director Kurt Kuenne -- one of Andrew's best friends growing up -- decided to travel across the country to meet with all of Andrew's friends and family, documenting the entire journey as a tribute to his best pal. At the same time, we learn more and more about the investigation -- who killed Andrew, why and how. Several gut-wrenching twists and turns later, we're left with a film that will rock you to your core. You will cry. You will hurt -- and this film will sit with you for days, weeks, months. But you will come away believing in people. Believing that even where there is evil, there is also a tremendous amount of good.

Kuenne directed, produced and edited the film all on his own. He never traveled with a crew, and what little help he received came in the form of support from fellow friends; folks who cared for Andrew, who loved him and would do anything for him. On the film's official website (which [you can check out here](#), though keep in mind lots of details will be revealed), Kuenne says, "I wish that I had never had the opportunity to make this film. I wish that my friend Dr. Andrew Bagby was alive and well and that I was blissfully ignorant of the lessons I've learned

along this journey. Alas, this is not the case. When bad things happen, good people have to take what they've learned and make the world a better place, and that is precisely what I hope this film will do – make the world a better place."

Should this film garner the attention it so rightfully deserves, it is my belief that *Dear Zachary* will do just that -- make the world a better place. For starters, it's already inspired me to work on being a better person.