

**A:** The fact that a loved one may have passed it to them.

GET THE FACTS ON ADULT PERTUSSIS VACCINATION

MKT20815-1 11/10

sources of pertussis

RSS | Twitter | Facebook

movie titles, actors, directors

IN THEATERS    NEW ON DVD    TOP RATED    COLUMNS & FEATURES    TRAILERS & VIDEO

## Dear Zachary: A Letter to a Son About His Father

Reviewed by **Chris Barsanti** on Nov 5 2008

DVD Release Date: February 24, 2009



critics:

users:

you:

*Dear Zachary: A Letter to a Son About His Father* is a film that nobody should ever feel forced to make, but just about everybody should see. It's a story about a murder, made by the victim's oldest friend, and structured as a cinematic letter to the victim's son Zachary, a boy he would never know. The people involved are all too real, composed of both a goodness and evil that one never sees convincingly created in narrative film; neither the villains nor heroes here would quite be believed, which is just part of what gives filmmaker Kurt Kuenne's documentary such wrenching paths.

Kuenne's friend was Andrew Bagby, a pudgy, bounding ball of energy who quite clearly was a central light in the lives of an astonishing number of people. As *Dear Zachary* begins, Kuenne crisply lays out -- with a gold-mine of home-movie footage to prove his point -- what an impossibly great guy 'Bags' was. To do this, he enlists an endless parade of friends and family on camera to back up his thesis, and then some. The camera itself can't do much more than show Andrew as a good-natured guy with a knack for friend-making who was more than happy to star in his buddy Kuenne's homemade movies. But the faces just keep coming, as do the tears. Nobody can quite believe what happened.

The story is laid out by Kuenne in a stutter-step flashback sequence, where the filmmaker (also the narrator) keeps rushing ahead, only to catch himself and have to backtrack, voice occasionally cracking with emotion. Andrew didn't seem to have been the best student, but when he finally made it into medical school and then to a residency at a hospital in a small western Pennsylvania town, he seemed to have found his niche. The problem was, he had become romantically involved some time before with an older woman, Dr. Shirley Turner. A possessive type who alienated Andrew's friends, Turner didn't take well to Andrew breaking things off. And so one night she lured Andrew to a park and shot him dead.



### Chris Barsanti

Chris Barsanti has been a Filmcritic reviewer since 2002. So there.

[full bio of Chris Barsanti](#)

### Watch Trailer



Trailers from Video Detective

<b>Film:</b>	<a href="#">Dear Zachary: A Letter to a Son About His Father</a>
<b>Starring:</b>	<a href="#">David Bagby</a> , <a href="#">Kathleen Bagby</a> , <a href="#">Heather Arnold</a> , <a href="#">Kurt Kuenne</a> , <a href="#">Shirley Turner</a> , <a href="#">Zachary Andrew Turner</a> , <a href="#">Andrew Bagby</a>
<b>Director:</b>	<a href="#">Kurt Kuenne</a>
<b>Screenwriter:</b>	<a href="#">Kurt Kuenne</a>
<b>Producer:</b>	<a href="#">Kurt Kuenne</a>
<b>Genre:</b>	History
<b>MPAA Rating:</b>	NR
<b>Time:</b>	95 minutes
<b>Year:</b>	2008

The sad and sordid melodrama that unfolds afterwards -- with Turner fleeing to Canada and announcing that she was pregnant with Andrew's son, Zachary -- is only bearable because of Andrew's parents. As evidenced by their emotionally fraught interviews here, and the testimonials delivered by practically everyone who came into even fleeting contact with them, David and Kathleen Bagby come off as a couple of the very best people you could ever know. Down-to-earth and hardscrabble-tough yet possessed of a particularly sunny and life-affirming energy, the two seem the kind of parents whom a large number of Andrew's friends likely wanted to be adopted by. When they amazingly set off on Turner's trail -- just a pair of senior citizens heading off to Canada, determined not to let their son's murderer, or their grandson, out of their sight -- it somehow makes perfect sense. They're just that kind of people. But when the couple ends up sharing custody of Zachary with Turner, even enduring playdates with the woman who executed their son, it just seems more than anybody could bear.

Between Turner's psychopathic cunning to the sclerotic and unresponsive Canadian bureaucracy that seems almost determined to let her go free, the odds stacked against the Bagbys are onerous in the extreme. And that's before the story takes another cold-blooded turn. And another. The tears come in rivers.

Kuenne could have turned *Dear Zachary* into just another tabloid-shocker for the true-crime sausage factory that runs in an endless loop on so many TV channels these days. The film certainly stylistically echoes those hour-long episodes of predictable mystery (it's actually produced by MSNBC Films) and turns into something of an advocacy piece near the end. But as much as it can seem a true-crime procedural at times, *Dear Zachary* isn't ultimately about murder and its aftermath, it's about things even more primal. This is a film about love, its fragility, and its strength.

Zachary smiles.

comments (1)    recommend (0)

See more in: [Dear Zachary: A Letter to a Son About His Father](#), [Kurt Kuenne](#)



Login

Login required, [click here to begin](#)

Share

This Page

Follow

Cancel

Post



**Beverly Feldman**

Watched a letter to Zackery the other night. Can't stop thinking about it. My heart goes out to the grandparents.

July 25, 2010, 4:14:06 PM PDT – Reply

### Rabbit à la Berlin

by Chris Cabin

### Hemingway's Garden of Eden

by Blake French

### Black Swan

by Sean O'Connell

### I Love You Phillip Morris

by Jesse Hassenger

## movie reviews coming soon



12/3/2010:

### Casino Jack

Director: George Hickenlooper,  
Starring: Kevin Spacey, Barry Pepper, Kelly Preston, Christian Campbell, Jon Lovitz, Yannick Bisson, Rachelle Lefevre, Eric Schweig, Maury Chaykin, Joe Pingue, Matt Gordon, Spencer Garrett, Daniel Kash, Ruth Marshall, Jeffrey R. Smith, more...

[read more](#)

[Another Year](#)

Opening 12/31/2010

[Blue Valentine](#)

Opening 12/31/2010

[See more movie reviews coming soon](#)

## More from AMC Sites

[AMC Blogs](#)

[AMC Movie Guide](#)

[Filmsite](#)

[Walter White Is Coming to Town... Via These Breaking Bad Holiday Gifts](#)

[Moe, Larry, Curly, or a Pie to the Face? Which Stooge Has the Best Slapstick Moves?](#)

[Bedtime Stories Movie Quiz](#)

[Top Ten Reasons We Can't Get Enough White](#)