

# Documentary returns to South Bay ahead of television debut

By HEATHER ZIMMERMAN

The documentary *Dear Zachary* has screened this year at festivals throughout the United States, as well as in Canada and the Netherlands. Now the film will, in a sense, be returning home to the Bay Area.

*Dear Zachary* opens Dec. 5 for a week's engagement at Camera 3 Cinemas, 288 S. Second St., San Jose. The film's director Kurt Kuenne, a South Bay native, will be on hand to discuss the film at evening showings on Dec. 5 and every screening on Dec. 6.

Kuenne, who also produced and scored the documentary, has a strong personal connection to *Dear Zachary*, which in part is a memorial to his close longtime friend Dr. Andrew Bagby, who also grew up in the South Bay. Bagby's parents, Kate and David Bagby, still reside in Sunnyvale.

In 2001, the 28-year-old Bagby was murdered, and the suspected killer was Shirley Turner, Bagby's ex-girlfriend and the mother of his unborn child. Turner fled to Newfoundland, Canada, and gave birth to a son, Zachary. Kuenne began filming a documentary of Bagby's life for Zachary, drawing on footage that he had taken over the years as he and Bagby grew up together in the South Bay.

As Turner awaited extradition to the United States, she committed another murder while free on bail, which has given the film a further purpose. Kuenne, along with Bagby's parents, Kate and David, hope to spur reform of Canada's bail laws. To that same end, David Bagby also wrote a book, *Dance With the Devil: A Memoir of Murder and Loss*.

In April, *Dear Zachary* had its first showing before some of the very audiences Kuenne says he had especially hoped to reach. "I made it [*Dear Zachary*] public principally to be seen by the Canadian voting public, in hopes of moving them to action," Kuenne says. For that reason, he recalls feeling some apprehension about film's Canadian debut at Toronto's Hot Docs festival, but he need not have worried.

The documentary played to packed houses of more than 800 people. "They were very vocal during the film," Kuenne says. *Dear Zachary* was voted the festival's No. 3 audience favorite out



Filmmaker Kurt Kuenne gets a giggle from Zachary Turner, for whom he made the documentary 'Dear Zachary.'

of more than 170 documentaries from around the world. And following the film's Toronto debut and other screenings in Canada, viewers have been inspired to take action. "Many Canadians have not only written to me, but even copied me on the letters they've sent to their representatives in Canadian Parliament," Kuenne says, noting that he has shown the film to a senator from Alberta, and may screen it for Canadian Parliament in early 2009.

*Dear Zachary* had its first Bay Area screening in March at San Jose's Cinequest festival. Kuenne says that the film's showing at Cinequest was particularly memorable for him because it was the first opportunity for many of Bagby's friends and extended family here to see the film. "Seeing how much they loved the movie and that they felt I 'got it right' meant the world to me," Kuenne says.

In November, Kuenne attended screenings of *Dear Zachary* at the St. Louis International Film Festival, where he also had the chance to share the film with some of David Bagby's relatives. Kuenne just learned that the film received that festival's audience award. The film also showed in late November at the International Documentary Film Festival of Amsterdam.

Most recently, Kuenne arranged a private screening for the staff at the hospital in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, where Bagby was doing his residency when he was killed. "That was a really wonder-

ful experience to get to share it with all of Andrew's former colleagues and workmates," Kuenne says.

*Dear Zachary* has shown at festivals throughout North America this year and received rave reviews and numerous awards. Kuenne and/or Kate and David Bagby accompany the film to festivals whenever possible to discuss the film and answer questions.

The film was also picked up for distribution by Oscilloscope Pictures, a New York-based independent film company. *Dear Zachary* opened in theatrical release on Oct. 31 in New York and has been showing in selected cities since then—and is still showing in New York nearly a month after its release, no mean feat for a small, independent documentary.

The Dec. 5 opening in San Jose anticipates the film's television debut on MSNBC on Dec. 7. *Dear Zachary* will launch MSNBC's new film division.

Kate and David Bagby will join Kuenne at the discussions following the film's evening showings on Dec. 6.

*Dear Zachary* is set for a Canadian theatrical release early next year and the DVD will be released in February. Kuenne says he's also working on selling foreign rights for the film.

For more information, visit [www.dearzachary.com](http://www.dearzachary.com) or [www.cameracinemas.com](http://www.cameracinemas.com).