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> In the last few months, I've seen a number of movies flow through my office with the Sundance Award seal displayed proudly on the cover. Maybe I'm just not smart enough to get the artistic undertones, but I'd have to say I haven't been all that impressed with what I've seen. They usually feature a few interesting ideas, but I haven't found them all that enjoyable or entertaining.

Throughout the first few minutes, **Anywhere**, **USA** seemed like it would join the pile of disappointing Sundance films piling up in my desk drawer. Subtitled "An Autobiography in Three Parts," **Anywhere**, **USA** at first comes off as a pretentious film. Some moments drag on for too long, almost to the point of self-absorption. And, really I would have written it off as just that if it weren't for the short postscript at the end that manages to tie everything together with a nice philosophical bow.

Anywhere, USA is split into three stories focusing on subjects like love, misunderstanding and the

other screwed-up traits we tend to ignore. Though the ideas aren't anything new, especially in

Anywhere, USA

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films, Anywhere, USA takes a bit of an introspective look.

The first is the story of Tammy (Mary Griffin) and Gene (Mike Ellis), a couple with a unique relationship. Once a week (at exactly 2 pm), Tammy beats Gene with a tennis racket. Meanwhile, Gene has only cheated on Tammy seventeen times. The relationship is, by all indications, dead. Seeking something new, Tammy turns to an Internet dating service and makes a connection with Ali (Rafat Abu-Goush).

Gene is distraught over Tammy's apparent unfaithfulness and turns to his dwarf friend, Little Ricky (Brian Fox), for support. Ricky, however, sees Tammy's infidelity as the first step in an Al-Qaeda terrorist plot. Chaos ensues.

The second follows a young girl, Pearl (Perla Haney-Jardine), who is traveling with her hippie uncle (Jeremiah Brennan) after the death of her parents. Over the course of the trip, Pearl is forced to let go of her childhood.

In the final story, a man realizes he's never had an African-American friend. Rather than attempt to do something about it, he instead sinks into a surreal fantasy of what it might be like.

The first story is, without question, the best of the three. Even though the characters dredge up nearly every trailer trash stereotype out there, they're relatable. Little Ricky's quick jump to assume Ali is a terrorist isn't that unheard of. I'm sure we all know at least one person who mistrusts an ethnic or religious group out of sheer ignorance. And, at least for me, that's the whole point of **Anywhere, USA**. Although we're all willing to point other's flaws, we're reluctant to look inside and acknowledge the flaws in our own beliefs.

Unfortunately, the message isn't enough. At times, **Anywhere, USA** plays out like an art film. Without the ending message, there's very little holding the three stories together. There's also an issue with dead air. Even though stuff is happening on the screen, it isn't important to the story beyond offering the opportunity to flash a series of words related to the plot on screen. I get the idea behind the scenes, but they're often to the detriment of the storytelling. All three stories tend to skip out on communicating important information, instead deciding to toss in a few absurd ideas that somehow relate to the overall story. There are good ideas everywhere, though they aren't always used to full potential.

Anywhere, USA comes with a healthy set of extras. There's a 24-minute "Making of..." feature, which is an interview with director Chusy Jardine. I wasn't incredibly impressed with the feature, though it offers a bit of insight into what the film is trying to communicate. Additional information is found in the Commentary track. There's also a one-minute intro shot for a film festival, as well as the usual trailers and image gallery.

I doubt **Anywhere, USA** is something that will appeal to everyone. It has its quirks and the message behind the film is interesting. At the same time, the quirks and message usually come at the expense of the story.

-Starscream, GameVortex Communications AKA Ricky Tucker

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