

fourfour

Completely obsessed



Are you aware the sport that '80s teen pop sensation Tiffany likes to participate in most is different forms of martial arts? Jeff Turner is. Kelly McCormick wasn't...



...but now she is, thanks to a conversation (and eventual meeting) with Jeff, courtesy of Sean Donnelly's 2008 documentary *I Think We're Alone Now*, which examines the adoration these two broken people have for Tiffany. Jeff has Asperger's (which a friend of his pronounces as "asheburgers" - long A - making me think, "Hm, that's a new one"). Kelly is intersexed. Both regularly exhibit pitiable loneliness, and more regularly say things that are, however unwittingly, hilarious (Kelly: "I mean, yes, I go through a monthly period, and PMS and period, just like every biological woman does, *including Tiffany*, but...")

I Think We're Alone Now is so specific and weird and painfully funny that after I finished watching it, I immediately wanted to see it again. I can't remember the last time this happened. Immediately, this became one of my favorite documentaries, and the real crime of the situation is that it is not available on DVD. This needs to happen. (**Update:** It happened.) The world needs to at least have the option of witnessing its greatness. I came across my copy by chance; everyone should be so lucky. (I somehow missed this entirely when it made the festival rounds two years ago, and was covered pretty extensively.) I am as obsessed with this movie as its subjects are with Tiffany...



...not that I blame them, considering how hot she is/was.

What I love most about *I Think We're Alone Now* is that it isn't afraid to exhibit a sensibility that is decidedly less than P.C. Jeff and Kelly say funny things, which are made funnier by editing:

Jeff: "Tiffany and I have known each other, uh, most of her life and we are in love with each other, and, uh, she's a great singer..." (CUT)

Jeff (on kissing Tiffany): "No tongue, it didn't happen. Could've!" (CUT)

Jeff: "It's easy to have romance, it's just, uh, the other, uh, the young lady, or the lady saying yes, sa-ha, so, huh huh. Yuh." (CUT)



Anyone with a sense of compassion has to wonder if something sinister is at work here -- if the movie isn't just a laugh track short of consenting to its audience's open laughter at these people's conditions. It's the same question of exploitation that pops up with any documentary portrayal, and while it is always a good one, *I Think We're Alone Now* does a fine job of answering it. We hear stories from both Jeff and Kelly about the social rejection they regularly face. Jeff yammers on and on to workers and potential onlookers before a beach concert of Tiffany's, and people literally walk away from him, mid-sentence. This movie serves as an alternative to that shunning: it is the chance for these people to say their piece, to tell their stories without being interrupted by absence. Besides (and this, I think, is something that always stands): people are funny, period. Through nature, nurture and both working together, everyone's got their shit that makes them behave the way they do, and that behavior is, more times than not, amusing. You can enjoy it with a sense of endearment, not malice.

And oh, how amusing they are! Kelly has lined her apartment with pictures of Tiffany at eye level:



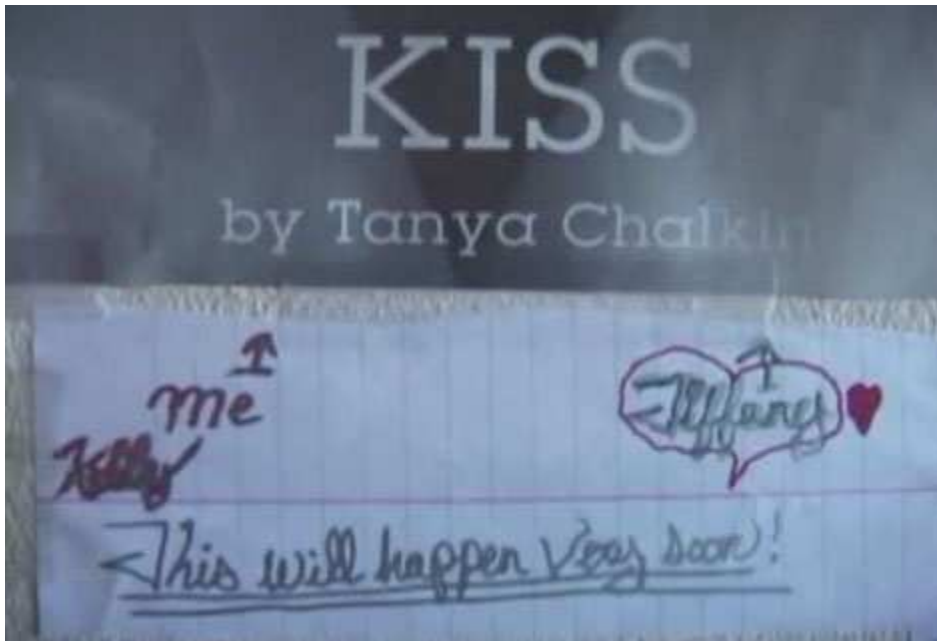
And sometimes at chin level:



My favorite bit of expressive art is this poster...



...and what makes it is Kelly's tacked-on caption:



Among the pain Kelly has suffered (in addition to ridicule for being a hermaphrodite), is a bike accident in 1987 that put her in a coma for a few weeks. When she surfaced, the first song she heard was "I Think We're Alone Now." When her sister showed her a picture of Tiffany, Kelly says she realized that she'd seen this woman in her coma and that she was meant to be with Tiffany (she still believes this and practically spits out the name of Tiffany's husband, Ben George). It was destiny.

And speaking of destiny, according to Jeff, who believes in radionics and dons a helmet so that he can communicate "in a spiritual sense" with Tiffany...



"What people don't know about Tiffany could fill many documentaries and many books. She has many gifts, callings, anointings, destinies. And, ministries that she founded or is part of. She can time travel without machines, and inter-dimensional. She does deal with aliens, different alien races, ethnic groups. And leader/founder or leader of many organizations that most people don't know exist." Jeff regularly makes wild

claims (he is in a "committed best-friendship" with Tiff, she dedicated her 1989 song "Hold an Old Friend's Hand" to him, she posed for *Playboy* to express her love to him). He tells someone on the beach before Tiffany's show that he's the singer's friend before he's her fan. The central point of Jeff's story has less to do with Tiffany and more to do with how devastating a complete lack of self awareness can be.

Interestingly, Kelly struggles with the same thing. She calls herself an "athletic machine."



She says, "I just really like to flaunt what I've got and always better myself."



She talks about her great popularity in high school, which given her adolescent awkwardness at 31, is hard to believe. Before this shot...



...she talks about getting her boobs done and says, "Watch out, Britney Spears!" I don't get the feeling that she's entirely kidding.

You can imagine how awkward things turn out when Jeff and Kelly meet face-to-face (they both go to Vegas to see Tiffany perform).



We hear a voiceover of Jeff explaining, "Personally, I call him male because I see him as a male. With a hermaphrodite, you can take your pick." Cut to:



And then, Kelly reveals preconceived notions right back:



Jeff says he is not, adding...



...whatever that means! (In case you can't read the white-on-white and like things to be spelled correctly: "I just fight against fascism.")

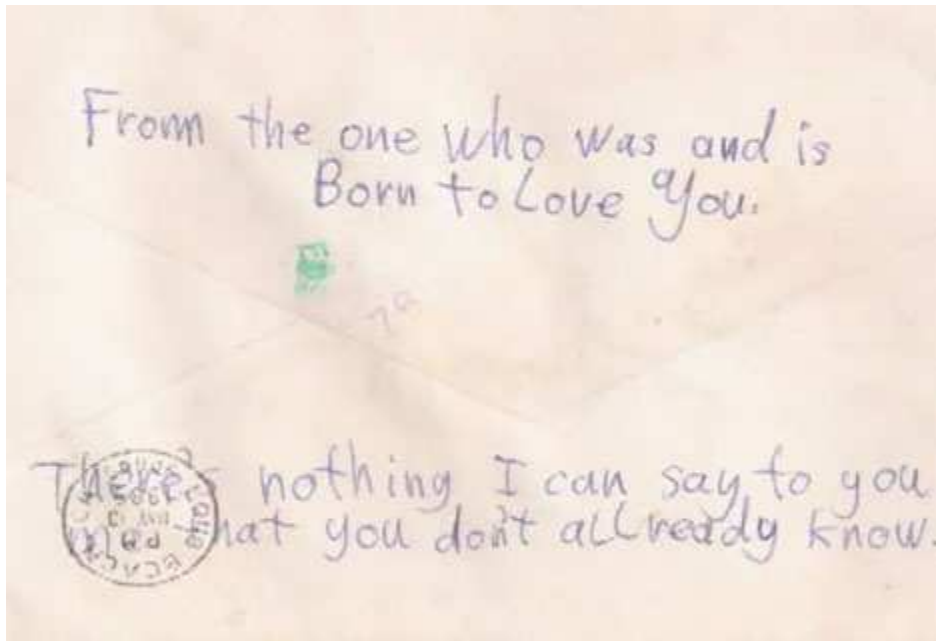


There he is out there fighting the good fight.

Maybe the most fascinating thing about following such uniquely sensitive people is that we are afforded a view into fanaticism that is completely unfiltered. Yes, the extreme human behavior here comes by way of the wacky shit that pours out of these people's mouths, but it's also in the value to which they assign all things Tiffany. After finally meeting her, Kelly slurs, "The biggest ambition I ever had just came true."



Jeff, too, is nothing if not devoted with a pile of tear sheets of articles about her and letters he's written to her for the past 20 years or so that have been returned to sender...



See, in 1989, Tiffany was granted a restraining order against Jeff:





I believe these clippings are from his personal collection. We later find out that Alyssa Milano has also filed a restraining order against Jeff. Meanwhile, Jeff shows off his collection of her "erotic art films."



As if to prove he is misguided down to the most insignificant detail, he also calls these "CDs."

The most insane thing, which far outweighs any outlandishness that we see from Jeff or Kelly (since we don't actually see that samurai sword...), is that Tiffany still entertains him, regularly posing for pictures with Jeff...





She also appears several times in this movie, for which she must have signed releases, thus implicitly cosigning on the documentation if not encouragement of at least one person she figured to be dangerously obsessed with her and another that she might think the same thing of if she knew the whole story (at one point, Kelly claims, "The difference between me and a stalker is they don't truly love the individual").





Just what is Tiffany doing giving the time of day to Jeff Turner? Is she merely coping with a nuisance the best way she knows how, or is there something grosser going on? Is she feeding into her narcissism by appreciating anyone left that still appreciates her? Is she scraping the bottom of the barrel of appreciation? Is what truly separates a stalker from a superfan a few decades of career decline?

The mind reels. Lets cleanse our palates with the comedic stylings of Kelly:





This woman, like many people *including Tiffany*, is a natural entertainer.

Incidentally, since watching this movie earlier this week, I've fallen into a Tiffo K-hole on YouTube, watching boring interviews conducted at malls and listening to songs from the half dozen or so albums Tiffany released past her prime. I can say with certainty that "[All This Time](#)" is pretty fucking great. In a very basic way, I understand the allure of Tiffany. The whole experience has helped me relate to Kelly and Jeff. We aren't so different after all. Although, as someone obsessed with their obsession, I kinda already knew that.

In case you missed it above, this fine film is now available on DVD.

February 11, 2010 in [Documentaries](#), [Filmses](#), [Freaks & Weirdos](#) | [Permalink](#)

Comments



This doc sounds really fascinating. As for why Tiffany still poses for pics with them? I wonder if it's just that she sees them now as being harmless, so why not? Who knows...

Posted by: [studpup](#) | [February 11, 2010 at 02:00 PM](#)



On the hunt for this, sounds great! Where do you find/hear about all of these amazing documentaries? Thank goodness for you - without your blog I would be seriously missing out. Looking forward to your ANTM weigh-in: Naduah, Ren and Simone ftw!

Posted by: [cam](#) | [February 11, 2010 at 02:43 PM](#)



This writeup is the right balance of hilarious and uncomfortable. I was laughcringing all over the place.

Please don't use the word "hermaphrodite" to describe Kelly, though -- it's antiquated and offensive (as beautifully demonstrated by Jeff). You had it right with intersex.

Also, yeah, this whole business just makes me want another doc about what the hell is wrong with Tiffany that she appeared in this one. *There Doesn't Seem to Be Anyone Around: One Woman's Devastating Fear?*

Posted by: slightly | [February 11, 2010 at 05:01 PM](#)



thoroughly enjoyed your write up.
i had heard about this on pajiba, i think.

Posted by: gem | [February 11, 2010 at 05:14 PM](#)



I thought the very first shot of the post WAS Tiffany. Phew.

Posted by: samanthalouise | [February 11, 2010 at 07:45 PM](#)



I wasn't horrified or moved until Tiffo K-Hole. Thanks for keeping me sober.

Posted by: mfg | [February 11, 2010 at 10:38 PM](#)



O
M
G

OMG. Thank you for bringing this to my attention. Must. See.

Posted by: James | [February 11, 2010 at 10:59 PM](#)



Girl, Tiffany's performing this Sunday at Splash! The spheres must be aligned.

Posted by: Pumping Irony | [February 11, 2010 at 11:05 PM](#)



I think if I saw this film it would make me question the my belief in humanity, similarly to how "Hapiness" did.

Posted by: A.P. | [February 11, 2010 at 11:10 PM](#)



"It's the same question of exploitation that pops up with any documentary portrayal"

You might love the docu "Vakvagany" as much as I do, if you haven't seen it already. It skirts this issue (and some of the other issues of this film,) in a really morally ambiguous way. Good thinkin' for the brain.

Posted by: Duper | [February 11, 2010 at 11:19 PM](#)



I read this post after watching 30 Rock, where Jenna gets depressed because her stalker has lost interest in stalking her anymore. Synchronicity!

Posted by: Nicole | [February 12, 2010 at 12:00 AM](#)



Thanks Rich, you've made my Friday morning! I'm always conflicted about whether to find these things funny or sad; your take on docs giving people the space they lack to talk about their obsessions is an interesting view.

@ slightly:

I had no idea the term hermaphrodite was considered offensive; I was just wondering why?

Posted by: M | [February 12, 2010 at 06:52 AM](#)



I believe Jeff was discussing his love for Alyssa Milano's pop cd's (from her secret Japanese pop career in the late 80s, early 90s).

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s1Qt1EgF5T4>

He does also mention his love of her 'erotic art films' as well.

Posted by: Anksmcskanks.blogspot.com | [February 12, 2010 at 08:04 AM](#)



On the YouTube channel for this movie, there is a video of Jeff trying to tell his side of the story in the Alyssa Milano case. It's actually kind of sad, he really has no clue how repeatedly sending letters to someone you don't know could seriously scare them.

Thanks for the write up, by the way. It made me really want to see this as I'm a sucker for documentaries of all kinds.

Posted by: Rachel | [February 12, 2010 at 12:41 PM](#)



@ M:

I googled around for a while trying to find a specific article, but my understanding is that it's one of those terms (like "mongoloid" describing people with Downs Syndrome) that has a use associated with fucked-up medical practices and attitudes. Intersex people used to be universally given involuntary surgery at young ages to make their genitalia "socially acceptable," often doing lasting harm to parts that had worked fine in the first place. When that stuff was going on, "hermaphrodite" was the term always used in medical literature.

One thing I also found was that the word "hermaphrodite"'s component parts implies that a person can have/be exactly 50% male and 50% female genitals, which isn't true. There's some more info here (from the Intersex Society of North America):

<http://www.isna.org/faq/hermaphrodite>

Posted by: slightly | [February 12, 2010 at 02:56 PM](#)



Oh wow, now I have no choice but to watch this documentary!!

Posted by: [Dominique St-Amand](#) | [February 12, 2010 at 03:56 PM](#)



Jeff (and possibly Kelly, too) sounds like he suffers from a delusional disorder, specifically erotomania:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erotomania>

Posted by: Britni | [February 12, 2010 at 09:24 PM](#)



WOW. Rich, this is pure gold. I haven't laughed so hard in a while. Where did you get this? It's not available on Netflix yet.

Posted by: [Heathermarulli](#) | [February 13, 2010 at 05:09 AM](#)



I was with you until I saw Tiffany's participation. WOW, jaw dropper. Great post.

Posted by: [SJ](#) | [February 14, 2010 at 08:20 AM](#)



There is also the charitable view that Tiffany just feels sorry for them.

Posted by: [Bourgeois Nerd](#) | [February 14, 2010 at 04:49 PM](#)



I must see this and I can't find it. This devastates me!

Posted by: [Marianne](#) | [February 14, 2010 at 08:45 PM](#)



First of all, my name is Tiffany so it was disturbing to see my name written so many times in this post. Secondly, this shit is fabulous! She probably entertains these people because she realizes that they are actually harmless and im sure its a thrill for her to know that anyone is obsessed with her at all :)

Posted by: [Tiffany](#) | [February 14, 2010 at 10:28 PM](#)



Thanks for posting about this Rich! Now, I must see this, immediately!

Posted by: [AntBee](#) | [February 15, 2010 at 09:04 AM](#)



Bonus Awesome: Kelly's self-made Bally's denim fan jacket.

Posted by: [Taylor](#) | [February 15, 2010 at 05:26 PM](#)



Thanks for this write up. If anybody is interested, the film will be available in the UK on March 8th, and in the US, Japan and Australia shortly after that. you can join the mailing list at www.ithinkwerealonenow.com if you want to be updated. that is all, as you were.

Posted by: [I THINK WE'RE ALONE NOW](#) | [February 16, 2010 at 01:17 AM](#)

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