

Final Critique: *Searching for Angela Shelton*

Director: Angela Shelton
Production Company: Hilltop Productions
Expected Rating: R due to profanity & adult discussion content

Distribution: No Exclusive Distribution

Budget: \$300,000

Genre: Documentary

Release Dates: Oct. 14, 2004 (Festival)
March 8, 2006 (Lifetime

Ch.)

Website: [Searching for Angela Shelton](http://SearchingforAngelaShelton.com)

Trailer: [Broadband](#) ; [Dial-Up](#)

Review Date: October 15, 2005

Reviewed By: Jeremy Hanke

"But whoever causes the downfall of one of these little [children] who believe in Me-it would be better for him if a heavy millstone were hung around his neck and he were drowned in the depths of the sea!"

- Jesus Christ, The Bible

These words should be a warning to anyone who would hurt a child-much less try and use God as an excuse for such abuse. But unfortunately, in the life of Angela Shelton, these words were never heeded.

Traumatized as a child by her father, stepmother, and brother, Angela Shelton tried to forget about the past by becoming a successful model in Paris and New York. Eventually she even went on to help Gavin O'Conner make his first film, "Comfortably Numb" and co-write his second film, "Tumbleweeds," for which he won the Filmmaker's Award at the 2000 Sundance Film Festival. However, she could never quite get past her own past demons, finding herself drawn into one abusive relationship after another.

Feeling all alone as a woman, Angela decided to make a movie about women in America. She decided that the most random way to select women would be to find all the women who had the exact same name she had. Somehow, she felt if she could make a documentary about all of them, she would find what she was missing in herself.

To her shock, she discovered that, of the 40 other Angela Sheltons she tracked down who were willing to participate in the movie, 24 of them had been molested, raped, and/or suffered extreme physical abuse. What had started out as a general search for women who happened to have her same name was transformed into a journey of discovering what abuse does to women who suffer it and making other women realize they are not alone.

Eventually she tracks down an Angela Shelton that happens to live in the same town as her abusive father. This Angela Shelton actually tracks down sexual predators and encourages the filmmaker to confront her father.

On Father's Day, she ends up doing exactly that.



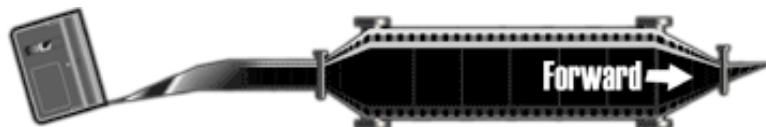
Angela starts on a journey across America in an RV that eventually...



...leads to her confronting her child-molesting father.

Content

As I sat down to watch this film, I noticed that the pacing is a bit slow and shaky in the beginning. At first I simply chalked it up to a minor flaw, but then reconsidered as I watched the rest of the film and finally saw it conclude in a similarly shaky method. It was edited in such a way that even the pacing of the film felt like the confession of a survivor - starting slowly at first, as the person works up the courage to bare her soul, and then begins to gush forth like a dam bursting as all the darkness pours out in a single telling; and when all of the grief and the anguish and the evil she have been exposed to has finally been expended, she ceases her narrative amidst sobs of utter exhaustion.



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