

Film Review: Director Tom Shadyac Tells of Personal Revelations in 'I Am'

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on April 22, 2011 - 11:30am

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Rating: **1.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – Tom Shadyac was on top of the world. He had directed several blockbuster comedies including “Ace Ventura: Pet Detective,” “Bruce Almighty,” “The Nutty Professor,” and more. When he got into an accident and found himself the victim of a syndrome that made him welcome coming death, he reached that revelatory moment that often happens to people in horrible situations as he reassessed not only his value system but that of the entire world. He chronicled his journey for “I Am,” a well-intentioned documentary that is just too unfocused, scattered, and philosophically thin to matter.

Shadyac’s film starts with the filmmaker asking two questions — “*What’s wrong with our world?*” and “*What can we do about it?*” He wraps his personal story around interviews with a wide variety of subjects from CEOs to writers to Noam Chomsky and Desmond Tutu. With a shocking lack of focus, “I Am” bounces around like a social/philosophical pinball machine, with most of the subjects centering around what is the nature of the human being?



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The basic point that Shadyac and his bizarre selection of interview subjects (while hearing from great minds like Noam Chomsky and Desmond Tutu is nice, many Shadyac’s list of subjects seems oddly assembled as if it was those who returned his calls that made the cut) are making is a good one. We have been taught the model of the individual — competition, amassing of wealth, accomplishments, etc. — but it actually goes against human evolution in that community and cooperation are as hardwired in us as anything.

Shadyac goes back and forth from personal stories to commentaries on the nature of man overall, never quite successfully blending the two. We hear about the director’s initial success — and, while it’s set up as a joke, asking his interview subjects if they’ve heard of “Ace Ventura” was an oddly self-centered choice for a film supposedly about the opposite — and how he learned that money couldn’t solve his problems. The old-fashioned “money can’t buy you happiness” argument that Shadyac espouses while talking about moving into his mansion is a little hard to take in today’s economic environment. And a bit naive. Most of us know in our core that money and stuff won’t bring you happiness but they certainly make it easier to find that happiness on your own. There’s also a bit of hypocrisy in the fact that Shadyac went through all of these treatments for his syndrome and made this movie and neither would have happened without his “Ace Ventura” money. Getting Jim Carrey to talk out of his ass may not have directly brought Shadyac happiness but it certainly laid the pavement for him to walk on.



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“I Am” was written and directed by Tom Shadyac. It opens in Chicago on April 22nd, 2011 and runs 79 minutes.



I Am

Photo credit: Paladin

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