



DAILY SCREENS

Indie Meme Review: *Tell It Like a Woman*

Anthology by women directors takes a global view of womanhood

BY JASMINE LANE, 2:30PM, THU. APR. 20, 2023



Anthology feature *Tell It Like a Woman* delivers, largely, exactly what it promises: seven shorts by seven women, each featuring women as their protagonists.

Helmed by an international roster of women filmmakers including Catherine Hardwicke and Taraji P. Henson, the collection has its hits and its misses, though given the personal nature of the subject matter, I wouldn't expect much consensus on those rankings – just like the women at its heart, this anthology contains multitudes.

Opening the collection is a pair of biographical shorts: Henson's "Pepcy & Kim" and Hardwicke's "Elbows Deep." The former tells the story of Kim Carter, founder of the nonprofit Time for Change Foundation, through her transition out of the prison system and into counseling and rehab programs. The latter depicts a single story remembered by Dr. Susan Partovi, "Renegade MD" and health care advocate for L.A.'s unhoused population, as she treats troubled young woman Validation during the height of the COVID pandemic. Both segments highlight

the ways women take care of each other, though placing them back-to-back like this did initially make me think that every short in the anthology would be in the same “based on a true story” vein.

“Lagonegro,” directed by Lucía Puenzo, takes things in a more fictionalized direction, as we follow Ana (Eva Longoria) on her return to Lagonegro, Italy, where her estranged sister Sarah has recently passed away. A classic career woman, Ana is shocked to discover that not only did Sarah have a daughter, but she’s named Ana as the child’s caretaker. Questions promptly arise around parenthood, familial obligation, and the frequent necessity as women to balance personal aspirations against socioemotional expectations. What exactly do we owe to those we’ve left behind? Quiet, precocious Lena is here to help Ana find out.

Mipo O directs slice-of-life short “A Week in My Life,” one of my personal favorites in the anthology, about an overworked single mother and her two young children. Over the course of the titular week, Yuki (Anne Watanabe) moves through her relentlessly busy life with patience, grace, and a truly admirable degree of love. After seven days of exhaustion and packed schedules, it’s her children who step up to take care of Yuki. At the end of the short, my neighbor whispered, “That was like a really long ad for a Roomba.” She wasn’t strictly wrong, but what a sweet and satisfying ad it is.

In Maria Sole Tognazzi’s “Unspoken,” a veterinarian who consistently prioritizes work over family finds herself in the midst of another family’s conflict when an abused woman and her husband arrive at the clinic. While something about this short felt a little overwrought to me, it also has one of the more nuanced depictions of women as caretakers, with protagonist Diana (Margherita Buy) failing to be there for her family while simultaneously being there for a stranger at an incredibly vital time.

Perhaps the best reason to check out *Tell It Like a Woman* is the penultimate short, Leena Yadav’s “Sharing a Ride,” in which an unexpected encounter with a trans sex worker leads plastic surgeon Divya (Jaqueline Fernandez) to discover her own identity. This is also the first short in the group that breaks with conventional narrative structures, with a montage of gorgeous gender-defiant imagery at its center, making it not only told by a woman but, in my not-so-humble opinion, like a woman, too.

Animated segment “Aria” by Silvia Carobbio closes out the set in an abstract, wordless expression of gender roles as literal boxes we’re trapped in, arranged in a literal panopticon – a circular prison oriented around a central guard tower, so that all inmates can be watched by a single sentry – only to reveal that in the end, the tower is empty and there’s no one to police us but ourselves.

Though I would’ve liked to see these shorts plunge more deeply into the abstract concept of what it means to tell a story not just as a woman or about a woman but in a way only a woman can, in a world that seems increasingly determined to reduce the breadth of feminine identity to a singular biological imperative, these shorts feel triumphant.

Tell It Like a Woman Trailer #1 (2023)



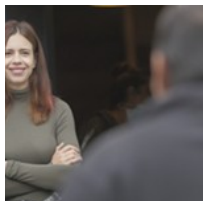
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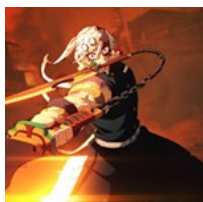
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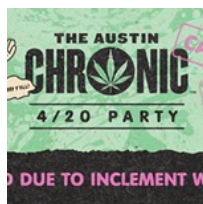
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