

# FILMSTALKER

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## Eve of Understanding



I've been following [Eve of Understanding](#) on the filmmakers' blog for some time now. They really have grasped what it is to write about filmmaking and to blog about the process, I'd go so far as to say that this is the most comprehensive filmmaking blog I've ever read. You marketing companies who are throwing out blogs for major films should take note of [Open Plan Films](#) and what they've done.

However it's Eve of Understanding that I'm concerned with. I just read that they've only recently managed to secure the funding for the budget costs, that's all the expenses of the films, not the salaries. All the cast and crew, barring the sound team, have deferred their payments until the film makes money. That's astounding for all those involved. However what's more astounding is how good the film actually is.



I'm not going to lie about this, but the majority of the screeners I've seen aren't that great. Some show promise in some areas but are failed in others, however there are a few that take you by surprise and make you think that there is a lot of talent here. I've seen that a few times and mentioned so in the reviews.

So I wasn't sure how this was going to turn out. I had read about the production as it moved along and it all sounded as though it was a step up from a lot of independent, small budget films, but the proof was really in the watching.

Eve of Understanding has been receiving a lot of accolades from the festivals it attends, and now I know why. The film is really good, and I don't just mean in one area. There's a strong and intelligent script, heartfelt performances, very well shot, all in all you could hardly believe that this film is from the same low budget production I was reading about day to day.

Eve of Understanding is the story of Donna, a woman who is really struggling with her own life and relationships. She's a "chain smoker with a bad haircut" (not my words, those of the official site!), and she's really been through the crappy end of life. However it's clear from the outset that she's trying to get along, she's trying to make things right, and it's just as her mother, Eve, dies that we join her.

She's been left a case full of gifts from her mother, gifts for her mother's old friends and friends of Donna, and a final request that Donna heads out alone and delivers these in the order she's given. Each gift carries a little message for everyone, and it seems a little bit of understanding for Donna.

It's a wonderful concept, and so simple. I hope they don't mind when I steal it for my will - I promise you'll get a credit at the end!

Straight away you knew that there was a higher level of production here, as the title sequence was really quite simple but very effective, and it keeps in tone with the rest of the story. It shows simple frames that don't overly tell too much which are very well edited together, and accompanied by an excellently fitting piece of music which carries throughout the film.

In the opening scene I was thinking that [Rebecca Lowman](#), who plays Donna, was perhaps too self conscious in her performance, but it's only later when we revisit this scene that we realise that the character herself is the one feeling uncomfortable. Once this initial scene passes we see that Lowman delivers an excellent performance moving her character along her journey and slowly changing from meeting to meeting.

Her performance is very natural, something that is helped by the equally natural dialogue, and she gives a totally believable performance. Her character appears bullish and string-willed, particularly at the start of the film, but we see that she's scared, confused and extremely hurt underneath all that.

I really was surprised at how good she was and how well I was taken into her character. A large part of this is seeing the way she changes in her performance throughout Donna's journey. Again this is helped both by the great dialogue and changes to appearance and wardrobe, but it's Lowman that really carries it through the screen and to me as the audience.

The script is one of the strongest elements of the film. It really did make an impression because looking through the notes I made after the film it's mentioned time and time again. [Alyson Shelton](#) not only wrote the script but she also directed, and she did an outstanding job on both.

I love when a writer and/or director credits the audience with intelligence and doesn't feel the need to spell out every single detail. After all doing so pulls away from real life, because characters in real life surmise all the time, they make their own conclusions, they don't piece together all the facts laid neatly before them, and this is something that this film realises and shows.

We are never treated to over-explanations of events or having everything spelled out to us. Instead we see events as the real characters would see them, we hear their conversations as real people would say them, and amazingly (sarcasm directed at Hollywood) we understand what is happening.

We don't need to see Donna being struck to know that she's in an abusive relationship, and we don't need to see flashbacks or hear her mother's ghostly voice explain about her past. It's hinted at in conversation, shown in the way characters behave with each other. For instance when Donna is with her husband you can see in her guarded and submissive responses what happens in that household.

I love this style of writing, and I love the fact that Shelton has left these understandings to the audience. She carries this throughout the script, and it makes for a very intelligent story that is so natural and realistic.

One scene that captured this so well for me was when Donna appears drunk at her ex-lover's house, and in the morning hangover state they have sex, and I say that quite deliberately. It's real, it's that morning after feeling, the let's just get down to it feeling. That scene really did capture a lot of feelings I've been through in the past in similar situations, and it was amusing and still so entirely realistic. It's something I can't stop praising this film enough for.

It's during these intimate moments and similar conversations with the people from both Eve's and Donna's past, that we discover what made her become the person that she is, and what made her mother the person she was. Through these forced meetings we see her grow some self-awareness and go through a little discovery of her own, aided by her mother's plan, and finally she discovers some truths about herself and who she really can and should be.

The film itself is shot really well. Scenes are well laid out with natural and warm lighting throughout. It looks simply shot, but it's been done so effectively. Again it hardly looks as though it was such a struggle to make, especially in terms of funds and equipment, it looks much more than it first appears to be.

Overall it's a very good film, wonderfully scripted with a natural and realistic tone throughout. The lead is very good and matches the tone of the script so well, she really does bring the character to life and give her a huge amount of depth, conveying her personal journey as though she was going through it right there on screen.

I wrote in my notes afterwards, "traditional storytelling". Now I don't know if I meant traditional, or if I should have written something more like real storytelling. Whichever, Eve of Understanding is a very strong movie that shows a lot of promise for Rebecca Lowman as well as those behind the camera, and in particular Alyson Shelton.