There was a time when the embarrassing collapse of Anthony Weiner’s campaign for mayor of New York City was an event that the entire media was covering. But a new documentary that played the first weekend at the Seattle International Film Festival is the first time that the scandal has been covered with the nuance and complexity the story deserves.

The 42nd annual Seattle International Film Festival runs from May 19 to June 12 and takes place in eight different locations in the Seattle area. Throughout the festival, over 450 movies play that come from 90 countries from all over the world.

*Weiner* is a documentary that follows New York City politician Anthony Weiner. For seven terms, he served as a Democrat in the House of Representatives until a sexting scandal forced him to resign in 2011. In 2013, he sought redemption from the voters and ran for the mayor of New York City. But as he began to rebuild his reputation, he got caught up in an even more explicit sexting scandal that once again destroyed his career.

The documentary mainly follows Weiner’s run for mayor from its hopeful beginning to its bitter end and the footage captured for this film has to be seen to be believed. Filmmakers Elyse Steinberg and Josh Kriegman were given seemingly endless access to the behind-the-scenes of Weiner’s campaign and they show it all.

In the immediate aftermath of the allegations that he sent lewd comments and images to women online under the nickname “Carlos Danger,” he is shown 20 minutes before he has to give a speech to the press. He’s in a small room with his wife Huma Abedin as his staff is scrambling around desperately trying to find a way out of the mess Weiner has made.

Though Weiner and Abedin aren’t saying that much to each other in this scene, the camera focuses on them and you can tell how frustrated, uncomfortable and exhausted they both are. They have likely fought for a long time before the cameras started rolling and there’s no doubt that they will keep fighting when the camera turns off.

It’s a sad, quiet moment that does a lot to humanize a person who would eventually become a punching bag for the media.

Later on in the movie, one of the women Weiner sexted with shows up at the front of a place where Weiner will be making a big speech. To avoid making contact with her in front of the press, Weiner and his staff come up with an elaborate plan to sneak into the building by using a nearby McDonalds. What follows is a surprisingly thrilling chase scene that would seem absurd if it didn’t actually happen.

These two sequences are just a just a few examples of what makes *Weiner* such a fascinating documentary. The film acknowledges that what Weiner did was wrong and he should’ve been chastised for what he did. But by showing Weiner warts and all, the film also argues that Weiner, above all else, is a human being.

The film opens with a passionate speech Weiner gave in 2010, he’s enraged that the Republicans in Congress have voted against a bill that was created to help 9/11 first responders. Throughout the film, we see him connecting with the voters in a personal and honest way, regardless of their personal opinions of him. He brings up valid points regarding how he would like to help New York City. He loves his city and he would die for the people who live in all of its unique communities.

He comes off as a decent person; he’s kind to his staff, he’s appears to be a good enough father and despite his shortcomings, he clearly has a deep respect for his wife (one of the most notable moments in the film involves Weiner fighting with a voter after he criticizes him for being “married to an Arab.”) By the end of the movie, the case is clearly made that Weiner could’ve been a good mayor for New York City.

But the ultimate tragedy of Weiner’s campaign was that despite how good he might’ve been as a mayor, people are still unable to look past his flaws. In various speeches he tries to bring up subjects that are very important to him, but the media only wants to focus on the sexting scandal. Everybody is focused on the surface issues with him and they failed to seriously bring to light some of the actual bright ideas he might’ve had.

*Weiner* shows how genuinely caring people can be denied at face value for their flaws. A person can be the most well-equipped person in the room but if they have a blatant personal problem, it can be become so much easier to just mock that person.

If there are any problems with the movie, it would be that it occasionally feels over-directed. The soundtrack throughout the film is very over the top in places where music wasn’t needed. The directors occasionally attempt to use flashy editing in parts where it was unnecessary. The movie might’ve impacted more if it was put together by the in a way that felt more subtle and restrained. Steinberg and Kriegman have an endless supply of great footage, there was no need to make this any more stylized.

Despite this, you should definitely see *Weiner* when it comes out. Regardless of your opinions on the man, you’ll walk away from *Weiner* with a more detailed look at the political system from the perspective of a campaign that was doomed to fail. *Weiner* might be an odd guy, but the film dares to ask if that makes us any better.