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**I CANNOT TELL YOU  
HOW I FEEL**  
BY **SU FRIEDRICH**



[I Cannot Tell You How I Feel \(2016\)](#)

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Review by [Michael Sicinski Pro](#)

## I Cannot Tell You How I Feel 2016 ★★ ★<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>

Watched [Nov 24, 2017](#)

### Michael Sicinski's review published on Letterboxd:

[7]

This is Su Friedrich's best film in years, a sort of unofficial sequel to her classic *The Ties That Bind*, about her mother Lore, a German immigrant who was a "war bride" and came to the U.S. immediately following World War II. In this latest film, Friedrich documents the process of moving her mother into an assisted living facility, and transplanting her from Chicago (where she has lived for decades) to New York (where she will be closer to Su).

The work of the 80s and 90s that make Friedrich's reputation (including *The Ties That Bind*) tended to walk a kind of tightrope between the personal and the formalistic. Her later work has been more discursive and essayistic, with mixed results. But family has long been fertile ground for Friedrich. The mother / father diptych of *Ties That Bind* and *Sink or Swim* may be her best films overall, although it's difficult to say.

*I Cannot Tell You How I Feel* focuses on Friedrich's guilt over usurping her mother's independence, even as she knows it is necessary. But it is also about Su's own anxieties about aging. As she points out through a restaged photograph from the earlier film, Friedrich's mother was 63 when *The Ties That Bind* was made, and last year, when Su completed *I Cannot Tell You*, she herself had turned 63. In a number of on-screen textual asides and looping double-takes, Friedrich slyly editorializes on the pain of she and her mother hitting a very specific signpost in the aging process, but the overriding sensibility of the film is one of tenderness and universality. Where Su and Lore are heading, we are all sure to go. If we're lucky.

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