

BIJOU
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For the week of December 26th!
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Premiere
"ENCHANTING!"
-Glenn Kenny

Official Selection
Sundance Film Festival

From Jim Sheridan, The Director of MY LEFT FOOT and IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, comes his most personal story.
Starts Thursday, 12/25!
5:10, 7:20 & 9:30 nightly
Sat & Sun Mat 2:50 [PG-13]

GRAMS SEAN PENN
BENICIO DEL TORO
NAOMI WATTS

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF THE ACADEMY AWARD NOMINATED FILM AMORES PERROS
They say we all lose 21 grams at the exact moment of our death...
Starts Friday, 12/26!
5:00, 7:30 & 10:00 nightly
Sat & Sun Mat 2:30 [R]

movies BY LOIS WADSWORTH



OLDER SISTER CHRISTY (SARAH BOLGER) HOLDS ARIEL (EMMA BOLGER) AND GIVES HER A SENSE OF STABILITY.

BARRY WETCHER, FOX SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES, 2003.

Through the Eyes of Children

Family life and loss

IN AMERICA: Directed by Jim Sheridan. Written By Jim Sheridan, Naomi Sheridan and Kirsten Sheridan. Produced by Jim Sheridan, Arthur Lappin. Cinematography, Declan Quinn. Production Design, Mark Geraghty. Editor, Naomi Geraghty. Costumes, Eimer Ni Mhaoldomhnaigh. Composers Gavin Friday and Maurice Seezer. Starring Samantha Morton (Sarah), Paddy Considine (Johnny), Djimon Hounsou (Mateo), Sarah Bolger (Christy) and Emma Bolger (Ariel). Fox Searchlight Pictures, 2003. PG-13. 103 minutes.

Irish writer, producer, playwright and director Jim Sheridan (*My Left Foot*; *The Boxer*) and his real-life daughters, Naomi and Kirsten, have collaborated on a heartfelt family story based on their first of eight years of living in New York in 1981. They have taken fictional liberties with the memoir. In actuality, the Sheridans did not lose a child in Ireland. Rather, Jim Sheridan's brother, Frankie, died of a brain tumor when the boys were growing up in Ireland.

The film is filled with both a bittersweet humor and raucous good times as two young girls, 11-year-old Christy (Sarah Bolger) and 7-year-old Ariel (Emma Bolger), and their Irish parents, Johnny (Paddy Considine) and Sarah (Samantha Morton) move into a scruffy New York tenement to begin a new life in America. The children harvest laughs for their blanket explanation of all strangeness: "It's how they do it here," applying the maxim to everything from Halloween customs of trick or treating to the dress habits of transvestites.

These girls are knowing and wise beyond their years. Christy carries a camcorder, with which she records their new life. They see their mother grieving for their lost brother, and they see the hard time their father has fitting into a truly different world. But Christy, the elder sister, takes care of Ariel, the feisty, fearless younger girl, and soon they get to know everyone in the neighborhood. Their hearts are open to the daily wonder of this sweet life.

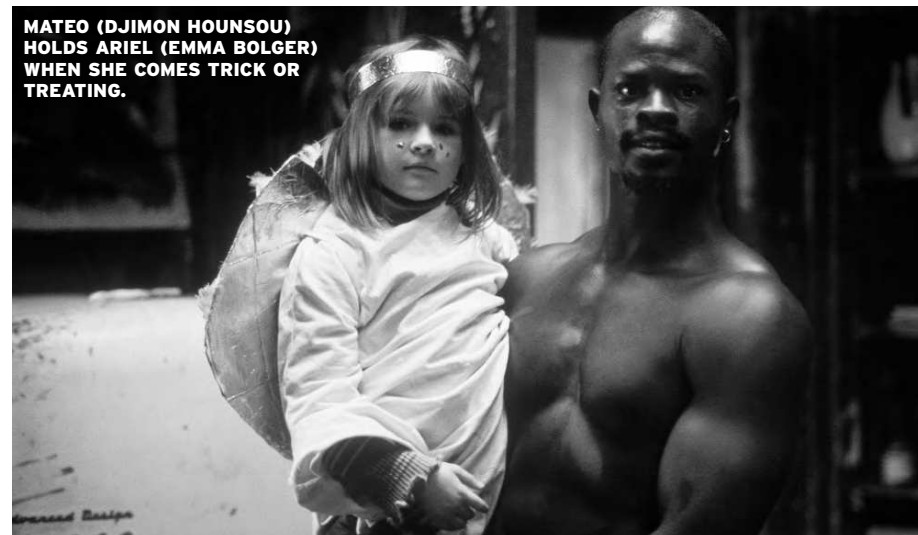
The girls knock on each door in their apartment building, including one with KEEP AWAY splashed across it in garish paint. When the door is opened by a large African man, Johnny stands outside while the girls are inside. But Mateo (Djimon Hounsou) is not a monster; he's an artist with a good soul, which Christy and Ariel recognize right away. Sarah likes Mateo as well, but Johnny is a suspicious guardian, and he's not so sure.

Johnny becomes the problematic center of the story, because the family's well-being depends on whether he can learn to love again. And while other events unfold, including an amazing (and true) experience at a carnival trying to win an ET doll,

ter and the performance are flawed. The film's over before we see how life changes for the family after Johnny's break-through, but that matters only if we fully embrace the transformation itself.

Morton gives an understated but profound performance as Sarah, who realizes the love that has kept her and Johnny together has faded and needs renewing. As an actress, Morton always surprises. She projects a deep emotional range through facial expression. Her work is subtle in all scenes but one, and there Sarah's raw feelings ring out with passion.

The Bolger sisters, Sarah and Ariel, perform so naturally and bring such a state of wonder to their roles they deserve special



MATEO (DJIMON HOUNSOU) HOLDS ARIEL (EMMA BOLGER) WHEN SHE COMES TRICK OR TREATING.

BARRY WETCHER, FOX SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES, 2003.

Johnny must find his own way back into the heart of the family.

For such a well-established film figure as Sheridan (*In the Name of the Father*), it's risky to let us see Johnny's vulnerability, failings and despair. Considine (*24-Hour Party People*) said he had lost faith in himself as an actor when he took the role. He shows Johnny as desperate to believe he can protect his family. But both the charac-

ter and the performance are flawed. The film's over before we see how life changes for the family after Johnny's break-through, but that matters only if we fully embrace the transformation itself.

In America isn't perfect, but it's a film you can give yourself to, heart and soul. Opens at the Bijou Christmas Day. Highest recommendations. **EW**

EUGENE Weekly

Due to early deadlines for the holidays, specific movie times are unavailable for print this week. For movie information, please contact theaters at the following phone numbers or websites:

Cinema World 8
342-6536
www.fandango.com

Albany 7
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www.fandango.com

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