



## *Sunshine Cleaning*

**Amy Adams, Emily Blunt, and Alan Arkin star in a film written by Megan Holley and directed by Christine Jeffs.**

By Josef Woodard

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If a unique story angle is a virtue in today's crowded film scene, the darkly perky and ultimately moving *Sunshine Cleaning* wins points from the get-go. In a beautifully strange and telling scene, our heroine, played with uncommon pluck and grace by Amy Adams, calmly explains her new career to her old high school friends at a baby shower. As they gaze at her, agog, she explains that she's gone from being a maid with dreams of a real estate license to a career in "biohazard removal and crime scene cleanup." She describes further that the emotional subplot of the dirty job involves dealing with "people who have been through something profound."

Working in dark and troubled terrain is nothing new for director Christine Jeffs, who previously made the impressive *Sylvia*, with Gwyneth Paltrow as the revered, suicidal poet Sylvia Plath. This time around, the slightly bitter but effective comic fizz flows easily, especially when Alan Arkin is in the picture, playing a feisty, cut-the-crap oldster similar to his role in *Little Miss Sunshine*. But a large part of the charm in *Cleaning* is Adams herself, a brilliant actress at her best in indie projects such as this.

Coincidentally, or not, Jeffs's calmly and weirdly dazzling new film—from a disarmingly fine script by Megan Holley—entails more than a couple of suicides, including one before the opening credits (a possible movie history first) and also a mother's suicide, humming sadly in the backstory of our sibling protagonists (Adams and Emily Blunt). The film is set in humbler, grubbier quarters of Albuquerque and in the aftermath of crime scenes, with an almost palpable smell of membrane, blood, and misfortune.

Yet the film's underlying spirit transcends biohazards or other grisly specifics. Like workers in countless other odd gigs, Adams is proudly making a living as a single mother of a misfit son. Her squalid affair with a cop leads her into the wonderful world of crime scene cleanup, and she calls her new company Sunshine Cleaning "to put a positive spin on it." She's that kind of a person, and this dark comedy turned surprisingly poignant character study, is that rare kind of a movie.

*For showtimes, check the Independent's movie listings, [here](#).*