

In America

The immigrant story is the story of almost all of America, but--even as our society diversifies at a fervid pace--the contemporary immigrant is too rarely featured in arts and entertainment. Irishman Jim Sheridan, creator of some of the more effective film stories out of his home country (*My Left Foot*, *In the Name of the Father*) has now offered this new paean to his newly adopted country. He used his own family's immigrant experiences as part of the lives of the Sullivans; in fact, the script was co-written by Sheridan's now-grown daughters, Naomi and Kirsten.

We follow Johnny Sullivan (the earnest Paddy Considine) and Sarah (the sweet Samantha Morton) as they and their two daughters (Sara and Emma Bolger) are bedazzled by the flash of Manhattan then are brought down to earth (or rather *up* a fifth-story walk-up).

Their story is mundane: the dogged business of seeking work (Sarah is a teacher, Johnny an actor), getting utilities to work, struggling to make ends meet, bumping up against their neighbors' messy lives. One life that is unlike any other is Mateo's (Djimon Hounsou), an African painter who lives in their building and is given to titanic rages. The earnest optimism of the Sullivans, and the openness of their winning daughters, eventually wins over the surly Mateo, and the family establishes a niche, tentatively but very hopefully, in the new land.

In America is sentimental, maybe even a bit treacly at times, but real. Its strength is in its modesty, and its concentrated attempt to tell its story, THE classic American story, straight.

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