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AFS Brings 'About Sunny' to Austin This Week

By [Jordan Gass-Poore](#) on July 8, 2013 - 1:30pm in [Austin Film Society](#) | [Reviews](#)



Amid the desolate Las Vegas skyline, a young single mother must decide what sacrifices need to be made in order for the survival of herself and child in writer/director [Bryan Wizemann's](#) feature-length debut film *About Sunny*, which Austin Film Society will screen **Thursday at 7:30 pm** in the AFS Screening Room as part of its Best of the Fests series.

The drama, which premiered on the festival circuit under the less emotional and more unfocused title *Think of Me*, is based on Wizemann's childhood experiences with his single mother in Las Vegas.

As a child of a single mother myself, I was drawn to the relationship between Angela ([Lauren Ambrose](#)) and her eight-year-old daughter Sunny, played by newcomer and Texan [Audrey P. Scott](#). The duo's interactions with each other involve relatively little dialogue, and when they are having a conversation it feels trite and one-sided, making it apparent that Angela is fighting to keep her head above water. But Ambrose and Scott appear to slip seamlessly into the psyche of their characters, down to the way Angela self-consciously holds her cigarette and stares longingly out of a taxi window.

Such moments, combined with the crude lighting, definitely add to the film's uneasiness - it hits too close to home.

The then-single mother of a childhood friend of mine was around 24 when I first met her. I was Sunny's age and couldn't help but think she was one of the prettiest people I had ever seen, with long, flowing hair and quirky retro clothes. But there was something about her eyes, the way she'd look at my friend, her daughter. Was it resentment? Hate? Jealousy? Pity? I'm not sure. Angela's physical and emotional character in *About Sunny* reminds me of how my friend's mom looked and acted when we were children.

Angela isn't an archetype or caricature of American single mothers, and, despite the unfortunate series of events that play out onscreen, she isn't one to be pitied or belittled. Neither is Sunny, who becomes less "Angela's daughter" and more her own person -- someone who knows what she wants and goes after it, the antithesis of her mother.

I applaud Wizemann for allowing viewers to formulate their own opinions about Angela and Sunny, instead of judging and placing blame on a particular character or entity. *About Sunny* does deal with relevant social issues, like mental health, welfare, public education and health care. But at the heart of the movie, whether the viewer agrees with its ending or not, lies the pure and simple truth of what makes us human.

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