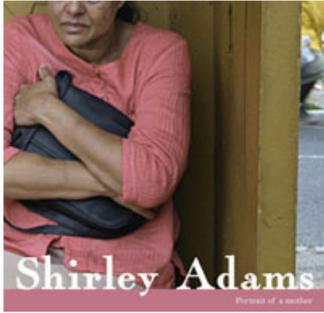


# Shirley Adams goes the distance

 By [Zeenat Ebrahim](#)

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Shirley Adams is a local production directed by Oliver Hermanus starring Denise Newman as the lead. The film won the best feature film award at the South African Film and Television Awards (SAFTAS) held at the State Theatre in Pretoria on 20 February. Hermanus also picked up the best director award and his lead actress Denise Newman the best actress award.



Shirley Adams is also the first South African film to be awarded the Golden Unicorn Best Feature Film Prize, at the 29th Amiens Film Festival in France according to Jean Pierre Garcia, President of the festival. It picked up numerous awards worldwide and the appreciation for Shirley Adams continues to go the distance.

## Fate of a single bullet

The film is set in Mitchells Plain, Cape Town and tells the tragic story of a mother and son caught between violence and poverty. The destruction of an entire family is caused by the fate of a single bullet when Shirley Adams' (Newman) son, Donovan (Keenan Arrison) gets shot leaving him paralysed and helpless.

Shirley spends her days caring for her son and doesn't give up despite his staggering condition. She's left without a job, a husband and the family she once had and has to rely on the charity of others to survive when she isn't shop-lifting.

## Discovers a betrayal

When a young, eager occupational therapist, Tamsin Ranger (Emily Child), comes into their lives, Shirley hopes that it might lift her son's spirits and finally put them on the path to some form of stability but her efforts are futile. She hopes to get justice from the incident that robbed her son of a 'normal' life but in the process discovers a betrayal she can't bear to share with him in fear of his already sensitive condition.

Shirley Adams deserves praise for the story of one woman's amazing strength and self-sacrifice. She bears the burden of being upset and betrayal but still manages to maintain her self-worth. The story is exceptional in revealing the unfortunate circumstances that befall the Adams family and particularly, Shirley who can depend only on herself to pick up the pieces. I think that her patience and unwavering strength grants this film appreciation and Newman portrays this well.

## In Shirley's shoes

The style of shooting primarily consists of close-ups for which I assume is trying to put the audience in Shirley's shoes. It gets a bit stifling at times and there isn't much breathing space for the audience to take anything in from a long shot which might be the point. Everything happens around Shirley and the strain that this new situation puts on her.

I have to re-iterate that with Nouveau features, you can't go into a cinema and expect 'the usual'. Movie-making is an art and pretty much works in the same manner as a painting hanging on the wall. You either appreciate it or you don't.

## ABOUT ZEENAT EBRAHIM

Zeenat Ebrahim is a freelance writer with four years' experience in online editing. She is a UCT BA Graduate in Film Studies and Media & Writing.

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