

## Blu-Ray Review: Catherine Keener, Rebecca Hall in Great 'Please Give'

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on October 19, 2010 - 12:25pm

- [Amanda Peet](#) [2]
- [Blu-ray Review](#) [3]
- [Brian Tallerico](#) [4]
- [Catherine Keener](#) [5]
- [Friends With Money](#) [6]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [7]
- [Lois Smith](#) [8]
- [Lovely and Amazing](#) [9]
- [Nicole Holofcener](#) [10]
- [Oliver Platt](#) [11]
- [Please Give](#) [12]
- [Rebecca Hall](#) [13]
- [Sarah Steele](#) [14]
- [Sony](#) [15]
- [Thomas Ian Nicholas](#) [16]
- [Theater, TV, DVD & Blu-Ray](#) [17]

CHICAGO – I've seen over a hundred films since seeing Nicole Holofcener's "Please Give" and the movie has somehow lingered in the back of my mind. It's what happens when characters are this well-drawn and believable. If a movie feels genuine, it has a much longer staying power and writer/director Holofcener ("Lovely and Amazing," "Friends With Money") makes dramedies about people that almost instantly feel completely genuine. "Please Give," recently released on Blu-ray and DVD, is one of the best dramedies of the year.

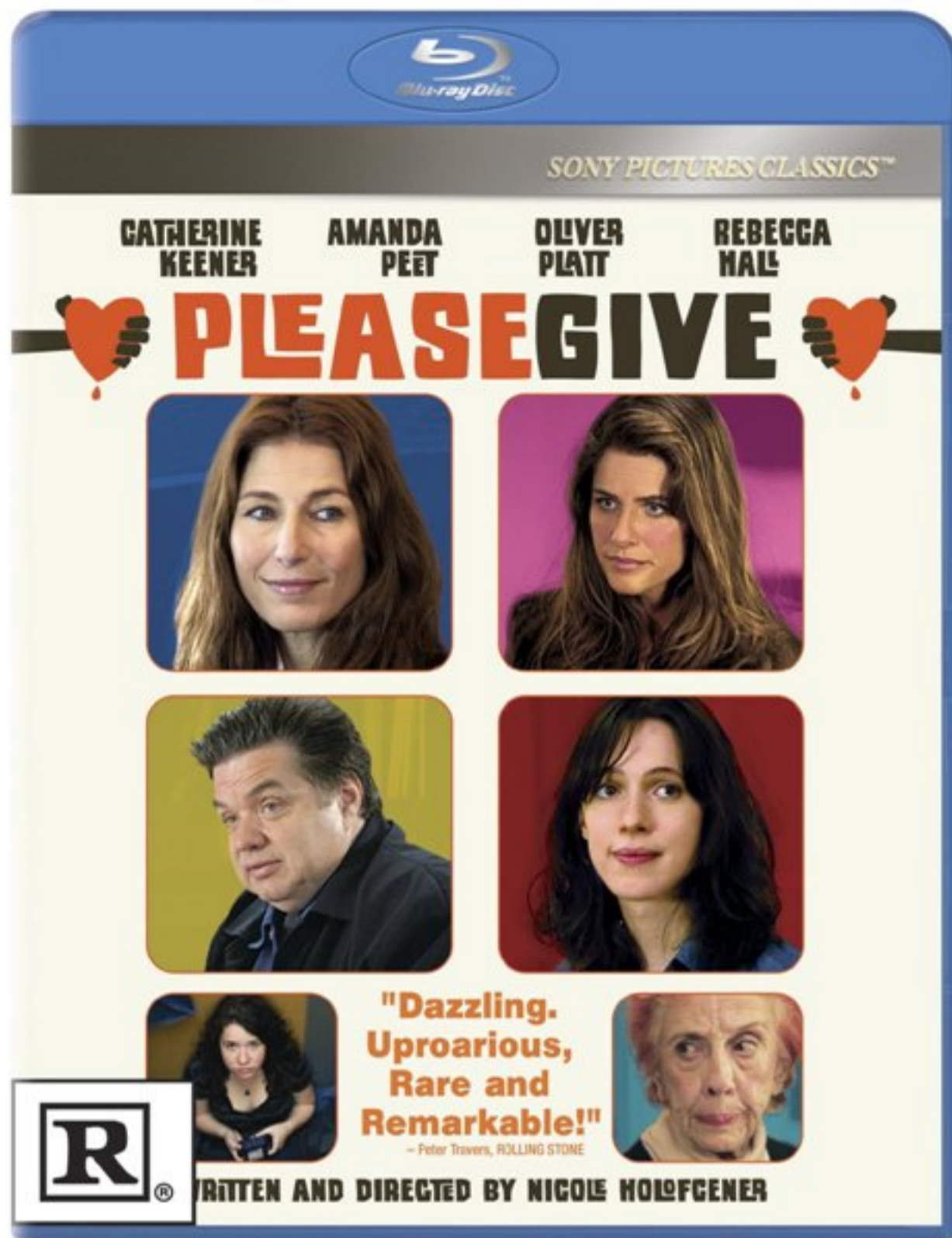


Television Rating: **4.0/5.0**

Holofcener is ably-assisted in her excellent filmography by working every time out with the great Catherine Keener, an actress who has an amazing ability to make any character feel real. Nicole and Catherine collaborate on dialogue that sounds real and put lives on display that feel like they could be your neighbors. "Please Give" features characters that are deeply-flawed but not in a fabricated way that would make them feel like the product of a screenwriting machine. Holofcener's film makes no grand statements and won't motivate you to change your life, but we can't under-value just spending time with some well-written adults.

Kate (Keener) is a morally-conflicted woman who makes her living selling the belongings of the recently deceased in her secondhand shop. To stock her store, she presents her business as a sort of easy-way-out for the relatives still mourning loved ones. Imagine the time it would take to go through your mother or grandmother's belongings one by one. Kate will take them all off your hands for a nice price and make it easy on you.

Of course, Kate is making a living as well and the guilt over her unusual job has started to stress her out. She gives an exorbitant amount of money to the homeless tranny that lives in front of her apartment and tries to do volunteer work to give back to the universe what at least part of her feels she is taking away.



Please Give was released on Blu-ray and DVD on October 19th, 2010

Photo credit: Sony

Kate's guilt is compounded by the fact that she and her husband (Oliver Platt) are essentially playing vulture to the cranky old broad who lives next door so they can expand their apartment into hers when she finally dies. The old lady's children — sweet-and-shy Rebecca (Rebecca Hall) and cynical-and-slutty Mary (Amanda Peet) — enter the lives of Kate and her husband in unusual ways. Mary draws closer to Kate's husband while Rebecca becomes something of a friend to Kate's daughter (the excellent Sarah Steele).

People who live in major cities like New York will recognize the random circumstances that allow neighbors to have their lives intersect for awhile and then come apart again; a little different from the experience but not so much. "Please Give" is a character piece free of repercussions or consequences. If it plays as a commentary on anything, it's that the world often doesn't have consequences. People make shady moral decisions every day. And the daring thing about Holofcener's screenplay is that these people are not drawn as villains. They may have more moral gray areas tugging at their conscience than you or me but they're not the typical cardboard characters of most black-and-white dramas about people who do bad things.

Holofcener's excellent script is helped greatly by a spectacular cast, most notably the young Sarah Steele, an actress to watch as she completely holds her own with more seasoned actresses like Keener and Hall, both of who are typically fantastic. I have a few minor issues with the final act of "Please Give" in that it kind of fizzles out more than I think it needed to but I think Holofcener purposefully refuses to resolve the moral conundrums of her characters in a film's running time. If only more writer/directors were daring enough to write characters that feel this real.

Special Features:

- o Outtakes
- o Behind the Scenes of Please Give
- o Q&A with Director Nicole Holofcener

*"Please Give" stars Catherine Keener, Rebecca Hall, Oliver Platt, Amanda Peet, Lois Smith, Thomas Ian Nicholas, and Sarah Steele. It was written and directed by Nicole Holofcener. It is rated R and runs 90 minutes. It was released on DVD and Blu-ray on October 19th, 2010.*



[18]

By [BRIAN TALLERICO](#) [19]  
Content Director  
[HollywoodChicago.com](#)  
[brian@hollywoodchicago.com](mailto:brian@hollywoodchicago.com) [18]

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- [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/please-give>
- [13] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/rebecca-hall>
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- [18] <mailto:brian@hollywoodchicago.com>
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