

## Little local film gets released in theaters

By [Jim Vanore](#)



Paul Sorvino as Catch Turner serves as the conscience of “Greetings From The Shore.”

We previewed the locally made movie, “Greetings From The Shore,” last November when it was screened at the Rehoboth, Delaware Film Festival.

It charmed us—as it has many during its run at various film festivals—and I said so.

N.B.: Although I wrote the article, it’s not the Royal “We” who previewed the film, as it was passed around here at the Herald, and the consensus is, it’s hard not to like this movie.

The film was shot on location at Lavallette, just north of Seaside Heights, and is an autobiographical, coming-of-age tale, co-written by Gabrielle Berberich and Greg Chwerchak, both New Jersey natives.

It’s an emotional story about Jenny, a girl who wants to spend one last summer at the Jersey Shore, before she heads off to college. Lavallette is dear to her, as the place of so many tender recollections in her young life—the strongest of which are those related to her recently deceased father.

Interviewed at the time, both Berberich (who lived the events portrayed on screen) and Chwerchak (who directed) were pleased with the positive reception the film was getting at festivals, but they shared the same dream of all those who make independent films: to interest a distribution company, and get the film released in theaters some-time in 2008.

Now, seven months and 60 film festivals later, they have to find another dream, for this one has come true. The film will debut in New Jersey and Pennsylvania theaters beginning Sept. 12, so we contacted (and in some cases re-contacted) some of the principles in-volved in the production to find out why this little movie is being released na-tionally.

“What made this (film) successful was individuals like you (the Herald) who took an interest,” said Berberich in a recent follow-up interview. “This can make or break an independent film.”

Word of mouth on the festival circuit for “Shore” was always positive, but someone had to get the word out.

“Ads are one thing,” Berberich said, “but the biggest endorsement is from someone who sees the film and says, ‘Go see this!’”

The movie has garnered 45 awards so far.

“The festivals build credibility,” added Chwerchak, “and the audience awards are the most gratifying. But good old-fashioned media—the local press—is what gets people to show up.”

Kim Shaw, who stars as Jenny in this, her first feature film (but since has landed a part in the new “Sex and the City” feature), credits the Jersey Shore with the movie’s magnetic pull.

“When Dave (David Fumero, her co-star) and I first stepped onto the beach at Lavallette, our jaws dropped,” she said. “I had never been out here before, and I knew how New Jersey was usually portrayed, but this was beautiful!”

Shaw is now working on a new film—“She’s Out of My League,” and will soon be on location in Brooklyn for a Comedy Central TV pilot, but still marvels over “Shore’s” influence.

“This is a beautiful story,” she said. “It has a lot of heart behind it. Even now, every time I watch the poker scene, I still get excited.”

Fumero, a native Cuban who grew up in Miami, had a similar reaction when confronted with the script.

“I thought, ‘what kind of beaches do they have in New Jersey?’” he said. “When we got there, I said, ‘wow... what beautiful sand, beautiful water.’”

Fans of the TV soap opera, “One Life to Live,” will recognize Fumero as Cristian Vega, a role he has played for 10 years. However, much more went into the shooting of the film.

“In a soap opera, we can do a 100-page script in a day,” he said. “Whereas we would do a four-page scene in eight hours for the movie.”

Although a lot of local press is what got “Greetings From The Shore” its initial recognition, now with a larger theater distribution, network TV ads will start to appear as the Sept. 6 release date draws near.

“I believe everything happens for a reason,” said Berberich, who used to wake up at 2 a.m. with her mother (before they had a VCR) to view a favorite old, black-and-white classic film on TV. “My friends, my parents’ friends, can all watch and enjoy this movie. It’s that sophisticated. It has no embarrassing content.”

Most viewers, I wager, will be hooked by the time Jenny whispers her most poignant line in the film, delivered after she is finally settled in her rented sea-shore room. It’s a simple “Ah-men,” but the context—and the impact—are both memorable.

As is this little film.

“This is what we wanted,” Chwerchak acknowledged, “a theatrical release. It is, after all, an old-fashioned popcorn flick.”