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Lavallette sparkles like the sea in locally filmed drama

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Gannett New Jersey



Kim Shaw makes an impressive debut as Jenny Chambers, who spends the summer before her first year of college teaching

As sweet as saltwater taffy, "Greetings From The Shore" is a dreamy trip through Lavallette during one melancholy summer.

Kim Shaw makes an impressive debut in a showcase role as Jenny Chambers, who spends the summer working in Lavallette before her first year of college. This should be an idyllic time for smart, spunky Jenny, but she is in mourning for her father and unsure of how she will afford her tuition. She returns to Lavallette because it's where she spent childhood vacations, and she's in search of some connection to happier times.

What she finds is a community of loners — an international crew of fishermen working as busboys at Lavallette Yacht Club — and she falls for the smoldering Benicio Aceveda (a convincing David Fumero, of ABC's "One Life To Live"), who is working under the unlikely alias of Patrick O'Malley.

"Hey," says a drunken Jenny, as Benicio rescues her from the clutches of a nasty rich boy, "you're that super-hot Irish guy from my class."

Jenny has been hired to teach "restaurant English" to the seasonal crew at the yacht club, which leads her into a circle of high-stakes gamblers.

Watching over her is Catch Turner, a down-on-his-luck mechanic/dishwasher, played to perfection by the expressive Paul Sorvino.

The supporting cast is stellar. Andrew Shaifer nearly steals the show as Flip Dooley, the quirky, unpleasant manager of the yacht club. A Philadelphia native, Shaifer uses his accent to great comedic effect. Dooley is a bully and a boor, but Shaifer's performance is a laugh riot.

Lars Arentz-Hansen also shines as the enigmatic Russian sailor Lars Ramkildestrom. But Lavallette is the true star of the film. "Greetings From The Shore" was filmed on location in Lavallette and on the Seaside boardwalk. The creamy cinematography does justice to the beauty of the Jersey Shore. Clouds are puffy, skies are a piercing blue. Beaches serve as a powdery backdrop to beautiful young people with big dreams and broken hearts.

The locals apparently are proud of the project, judging from the "Greetings From The Shore" posters that hang in stores. Shore towns have been targeted for special marketing of this film — banner planes carried messages about the movie over the sands of Beach Haven in August, for example.

No doubt, the film will go over well with New Jersey audiences, as "Greetings From The Shore" depicts the area with accuracy and affection.

The screenplay is loosely based on the experiences of Gabrielle Berberich, who co-wrote and produced "Greetings From The Shore." A native of Warren County, Berberich spent childhood summers in Lavallette and lost her beloved father, Leo, before she was fully grown-up.

"Greetings From The Shore" is set in the present time — judging from the 2004 centennial sign at Lavallette Yacht Club, as well as the \$40,000-per-year college costs faced by Jenny— but there is a refreshing lack of technology in the film. No cell phones, no iPods, no laptops. Everyone's unplugged, and that gives the movie a more timeless feel. Jenny calls her mom from a pay phone, which brings the young woman's isolation into sharp focus.

Throughout the film, there are allusions to "The Great Gatsby" and "Moby Dick," tales of ambition, idealism and disillusionment. In nearly every scene, there is a sense of yearning, of striving.

"Greetings From The Shore" is fresh and innocent, like a fairy tale, but there is just enough loneliness, and end-of-summer wistfulness, to keep it real.

Additional Facts

GREETINGS FROM THE SHORE

Starring Kim Shaw, Paul Sorvino and David Fumero

Opens Friday, Sept. 12, 2008

Rated R for language

Three Stars