



Down on 'the Shore'

by Stephen Whitty/The Star-Ledger

Thursday September 11, 2008



David Fumero and Kim Shaw star in "Greetings From the Shore," which was mostly shot in Lavallette. However, the Jersey Shore scene deserves a smarter treatment than this tame coming-of-age tale.

Greetings From the Shore (R) NewStyle Films (118 min.) Directed by Greg Chwerchak. With Kim Shaw, David Fumero, Paul Sorvino. Opens Friday at theaters in New Jersey. **ONE AND A HALF STARS**

In the wonderfully tart and knowing "The Opposite of Sex," Christina Ricci played a wonderfully knowing tart who knew, and refused to deliver, the same old sappy, coming-of-age story you probably expected. You know, the kind of movie that starts with the narrator saying, "I will never forget that special summer ..."

"Greetings From the Shore" is that movie.

It doesn't actually have a wistful narrator. But it does have an innocent protagonist, a couple of hissable villains, a nice-guy Romeo, a colorful character or two, and a big burst of improbable luck at the end. And by the fade out, its heroine realizes that, yes, she will never forget that special summer.

You may feel differently, though, about her movie.

The story revolves around Jenny, on her own for that last, magical, post-high-school season and trying to earn a little money for college. So she ends up waitressing tables down the Shore, smiling back at one of the handsome waiters and avoiding the local, nasty rich kids.

Nothing much else happens -- to her or in the movie -- for far too long. But just as the season is winding down, it turns out that the college loans she was counting on have not come through -- and the only way she's going to come up with the cash for Columbia is by finding a miracle.

Or, maybe, a shameless plot twist.

Newcomer Kim Shaw and leading man David Fumero are both pleasant (she's a little like a teen Naomi Watts, if you don't listen to the voice, and he's reminiscent of Javier Bardem, if you only close your eyes) but neither has much to work with. In fact, Shaw's character is frustratingly passive -- things happen to her, other people take charge and there's little sign that this summer has, in fact, taught her anything.

Dependable Paul Sorvino adds some avuncular good will as a local who shelters Jenny under his ample wing. And Jay O. Sanders has fun playing the bad-guy owner of the local yacht club, the self-styled "Commodore." But Gabrielle Berberich's script never adds any color or tone to them either; they begin, and end, as one-note characters. (A high-stakes card game subplot only made me realize how much I wanted to watch "The Flamingo Kid" again, instead.)

Shot mostly in Lavallette, the picture has plenty of postcard-ready shots of the beach, a fairly chaste love story, and a happy ending -- unlike "The Opposite of Sex," this is a summer teen movie no Chamber of Commerce or protective parent could disapprove of. (The MPAA, however, taking its typical hard-line against indie films, has given it an R, a rating the picture doesn't deserve.)

Yet, at the same time, it's hard to find too much to actually approve of here. The story is thin. The characters are slight. And pretty as the scenery is, well, summer vacation's over.

Rating note: The film contains some strong language and mild violence.