



Movies in Brief: *Greetings From The Shore*

By **MARTIN TSAI** | September 12, 2008

Greetings From The Shore is the kind of unassuming picture that relatively few moviegoers will take the time to check out. But it'll certainly grab their attention from the get-go, as it ambitiously tackles such weighty subjects as illegal foreign workers, xenophobia, and date rape all within the first 30 minutes. Anyone who accidentally wanders into the auditorium or, more likely, stumbles onto the film when it inevitably ends up on cable television, is likely to take a seat or put down the remote control on the arm of the Barcalounger and give the film a chance on the strength of these early scenes.

College-bound Jenny (newcomer Kim Shaw) is spending the summer waiting tables at a resort on the Jersey Shore, and moonlighting as an ESL teacher for the alien workers who are supposedly in the country on student visas but who are actually in violation of labor law. Jenny is uncomfortable with the fact that her co-workers are circumventing the system, but she is disgusted by the way the resort and its guests exploit and mistreat them. To make matters worse, the foreigners are uncooperative and downright intimidating when Jenny tries to teach them English. What's really refreshing about the film's take on the illegal immigration debate is how it frames the issue in such a realistic and ordinary context without compromising any of the complexity.

But after positioning its protagonist and the audience in a thought-provoking dilemma, *Greetings From the Shore* regresses to the kind of Lifetime Movie of the Week one might have expected it to be: A summer fling blossoms between the Jersey girl and the dreamy foreigner, Benicio (David Fumero). Meanwhile, Jenny has a chance to reach the goal her late father had for himself — graduating from Columbia University — but her financial aid barely covers a quarter of the annual tuition. As *Greetings* becomes increasingly reductive, predictable, and detached from reality, one begins to wish it will end before it self-destructs entirely.