

Review #55 : *Monte-Carlo* (2011)

Selena Gomez, Leighton Meester and Pierre Boulanger

TRAILER

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rxm_bVVhbr8

Monte Carlo is a nice, clean-cut, **heartfelt and uplifting teen fantasy** that seems constructed out of bits and pieces of movies that we must surely have seen before, but does it in a very witty way that makes it stick out from the copycat crowd. Its whole storyline actually makes sense and one doesn't have to constantly be on your guard because bad ideas or improper scenes are mediated. It's **chirpy and bright**, there are pretty locations and lots happen. Did I mention that it has great happy-endings ?



SYNOPSIS

As a graduation present from her parents, Grace (**Selena Gomez**) receives a trip to Paris, but that's not all. Grace's parents are also generously sending her best friend Emma (**Katie**

Cassidy) and her step-sister Meg (**Leighton Meester**) along on the trip. This actually may be prudent, because Meg is in her 20s and will perhaps provide some chaperoning.

The excitement soon dies down once they get to Paris and later end up with sore feet in a seedy hotel room. They decide to book with a tour group and that is when all the fun begins. At first Emma races around ridiculously in her high heeled shoes on the tour as Grace tries to keep the peace between her friend and step-sister. After being left behind by the fast-paced tour group, the girls enter an expensive hotel to keep out of the rain. It is at this hotel that Grace's looks match exactly to the likes of a wealthy British lady staying at the same hotel, **Cordelia Winthrop Scott**. By forces of **mistaken identities**, soon Grace is being waited on hand and foot, served 30-pound lobsters, whisked off with her friends in a private jet, and the trio ends up in a luxurious hotel suite in Monte-Carlo, gowned in haute couture, and courted by handsome young guys. **That's where all the action begins...**



Anyone that has been on a vacation for the first time or to a new destination for the first time can relate to this film. Just as in this film you have **different personalities thrown together** and crazy experiences going on... and then there are the boys of course. Finding love in another country is just plain exciting and so romantic. *Monte Carlo* has this and so much

more. I give this movie 5 stars and recommend it to all of you out there looking for a movie that includes **fun, finding true friendship and romance** all wrapped up in a sane and pretty package. This movie, however, is not just a chick-flick. Husbands and fathers will love it too !
I know some of them who rated it 5 stars as well aha !

REVIEW

It stars **Selena Gomez**, the Disney discovery who is 18 but looks 14 and, let it be said, is cute as a button. I liked her in the movie, with her round-eyed astonishment and unaffected energy. In another movie, in another universe, this would be a movie about Grace's trip to Paris. But this is a movie about Grace's trip to Monte-Carlo... and a **chirpy plot involving mistaken identities, a handsome French guy who falls in love with her**, and her whirlwind trip through a **lifestyle of the rich and famous** until she realizes how meaningless and vain this all is if your life is empty of any friendship, love and uplifting projects.

You may have a puzzlement about the selection of Monte Carlo. *What girl in her right mind would want to leave Paris and go to Monte Carlo ?* Monte Carlo is an overbuilt tax shelter with bargain-basement royalty. But the adventures of the girls have **less to do with travelling in Europe** than with **cheery situations and hilarious slapsticks** in a delightfully corny plot.

I particularly enjoy two details at the beginning of the movie. One is the **low-budget fleabag hotel** they check into. The second is the **whirlwind tour by sightseeing bus** they take in Paris with their guide (Valérie Lemerrier). As they trot though the Louvre, their guide seems to be trying to set a speed record^^.

The movie's **three young female leads are the most appealing parts** of the entire enterprise. **Selena Gomez**, as Grace, a Texas Francophile and waitress who, after saving her pennies and graduating from High School, travels to Paris, is delightful and sweet as usual. **Katie Cassidy** plays the spunky, working class Emma, engaged to Cory Monteith, while **Leighton Meester** (from *Gossip Girl*) plays the brittle, middle class, reluctant step-sister Meg, in need as far as the story is concerned, of protection, comfort... and male healing (**Luke Bracey's** thoughtful and tousled Australian obliges) since the loss of her mother. The actresses do their job well, and Leighton sometimes does even more and can be very deep and touching at times. It's Selena Gomez of course, who receives most of the camera's love as both Grace and her look-

alike Cordelia. The twinned roles register is a bid to show her acting range : while she handles Grace's lines and costume changes comfortably enough and makes you easily identify with her, as the ostensibly worldly Cordelia she looks and sounds **delightfully superficial and ridiculous**, like a spoiled child playing dress-up and taking important airs because she has money. Her performance as the haughty bold-faced Cordelia sometimes gets uncomfortable as she's naturally a very nice girl, but it then amplifies the ridiculousness of the jet-setter on high heels – through clever gimmicks and slapsticks.

Monte Carlo is a fairy tale about **finding yourself** and discovering what really matters in life (**true friendship, a home, projects, caring love**) after pretending to be someone else and visiting the whole world : Emma has never been better than in a humble home with her husband – cooking dinner while he repairs the lighting (although she had long been dreaming about yachts, millionaires and parties) ; Grace finds happiness and self-fulfilment in the charity foundations of the Marchand family with her own 'Prince' of Monaco (except this one is not bald as a coot and ugly like the real one^^) ; Meg finds comfort and learns to trust again in the arms of the comforting Australian. This **Cinderella story** is charming and generally innocuous : the stepsister isn't the baddie after all, the girls get to wear designer *frou-frou* and trade chaste kisses with sensitive men who might as well be boys, and female friendship isn't an impediment to a *happily ever after*. And while they may bend the law a little, at least the ending restores correct answer...

This is a GREAT movie for the whole family to enjoy. It's about **facing challenges in a creative way, finding yourself and what you really want** after playing at being someone else, hesitating and stranding ; stepping over one's shadows and mistakes, connecting with seemingly lost feelings and **loosening up**. All in all it is a very balanced movie with *no language or sensual scenes*, both rare even in teen movies nowadays. It reminded me of the good old Audrey Hepburn movies from the 40s and 50s, where movies still had a positive message, and the characters didn't end up together after having a few drinks or just got bitten by a vampire !

For all of you who were sitting on the fence : do yourself and your boys/daughters a favour and get the DVD ! This movie can open room for conversations with your teens. Dads : This is NOT your typical *chick flick* ! It deals with **real issues** that **real people** have, but keeps it on the **lighter side** and with great clever lessons. Just great ! +++