

## Blu-Ray Review: 'Somewhere' Paints Haunting Portrait of Celebrity Ennui

Submitted by [mattmoviemann](#) [1] on April 28, 2011 - 9:20am

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CHICAGO – Sofia Coppola's films are intriguing in a way that's often difficult to put into words. I often find my attention drifting during my initial viewing of them, and yet they somehow manage to linger in my mind long after others have faded. Her problematic costume drama, "Marie Antoinette," has become one of my favorite films to leave on in the background of a room, simply for the pleasure of dwelling in its subtly nuanced atmosphere.

Since Coppola grew up as a member of Hollywood royalty, she often finds herself drawn to protagonists—an unattainable teenage beauty, a reigning queen and two internationally renowned celebrities—whose lives are viewed under a microscope. "Antoinette" appeared to be Coppola's most painstakingly autobiographical effort yet, since it could be read as a symbolic account of her own privileged upbringing, in which she was prematurely thrust into the realm of public scrutiny (with her pivotal role in "Godfather Part III") before being (critically) beheaded.



Blu-Ray Rating: **4.5/5.0**

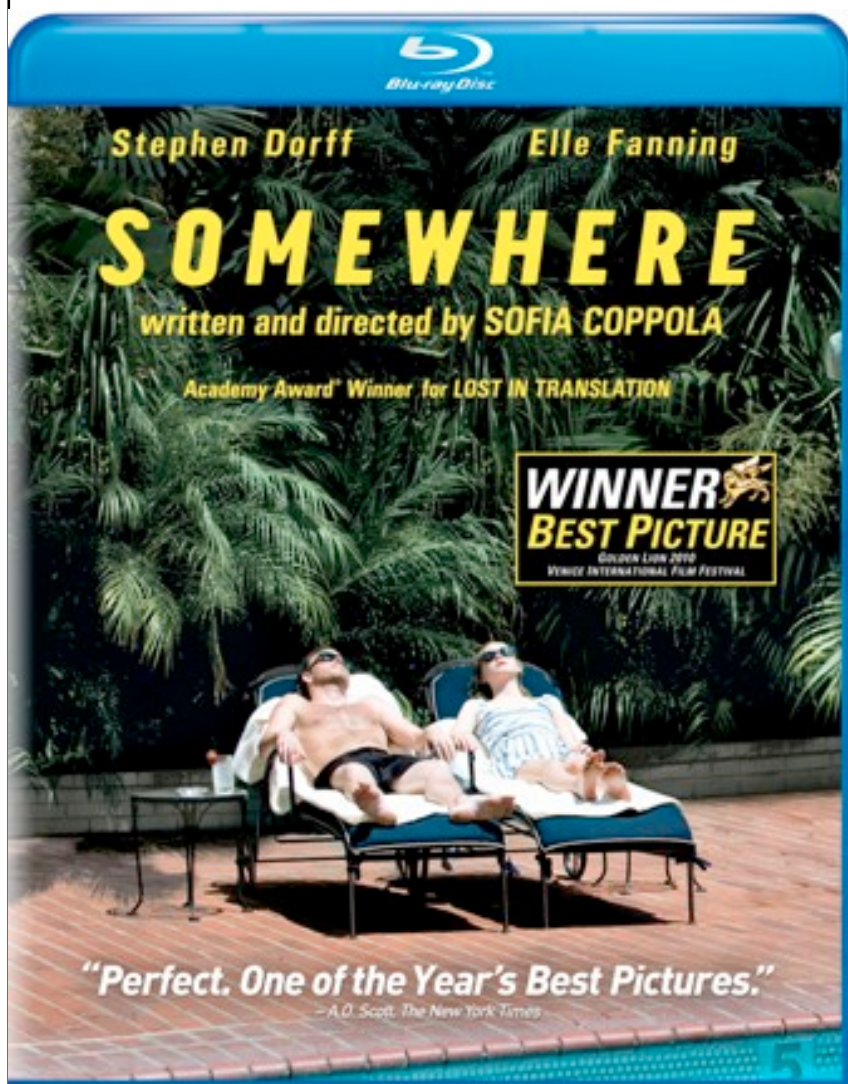
Coppola's fourth directorial feature, "Somewhere," is her purest and most sublimely satisfying tone poem to date. It functions as both a love letter to the Chateau Marmont Hotel in Los Angeles and a haunting portrait of the lonely lives cloistered within its walls. Movie star Johnny Marco (Stephen Dorff) is the sort of "Hollywood bad boy" who appears to be dazed and confused by the fame he's somehow acquired. In the first shot, he's seen revving his car into oblivion, until it's revealed that he's driving around a circular track. As usual, Coppola allows her characters to keep to themselves, and for a large portion of the film, Marco remains silent. All of the supposedly "interesting" fragments of his life (the film shoots, the glitzy premieres) are left offscreen. Instead, Coppola focuses on the moments in which he's not working, and her patient lens captures moments of raw truth. While nursing a wound brought about by his stunt work, Marco lounges about the Chateau—drifting through parties while failing to feign interest in the various women who throw themselves at him. A stream of perky publicists directs him through his day as if he were a pampered infant, or worse, a subhuman studio product. There's an unforgettable scene where Marco sits alone in a makeup room with a plaster mold on his face. The deadening stillness of the moment suggests that Marco's soul may be asphyxiating on the spot.



Stephen Dorff and Elle Fanning star in Sofia Coppola's *Somewhere*.

*Photo credit: Universal Home Entertainment*

Finally, Marco is coaxed out of his coma by a rejuvenating life force in the form of his 11-year-old daughter, Cleo (Elle Fanning). She suddenly materializes in Marco's hotel room after being dropped off by her harried mother. Cleo's infectious smile has mastered the task of concealing her inner need for a stable home life. In many ways, she's more grown up than her father. Immediately upon arriving, she takes on the role of a responsible adult: fixing meals, photographing the license plate of a supposed stalker, and shooting disapproving glances at her father during a breakfast with one of his disposable mistresses. Dorff's expression in this scene is akin to that of a puppy dog apologizing for the mess he made in the other room. Yet Coppola never allows her film to follow the worn formula of a redemption tale. By pacing her film at the natural rhythm of a weary day, she makes viewers realize just how many movies follow a contrived pattern of beats. Coppola proves that a wordless glance can convey more than any amount of scripted dialogue.



*Somewhere* was released on Blu-Ray and DVD on April 19, 2011.

*Photo credit: Universal Home Entertainment*



The performances are wonderful, partly because the actors are clearly drawing on their own experiences for inspiration. As a lifelong veteran of show business, Dorff is perfectly cast. He gently conveys the ennui of his existence through expressions of bemused detachment. Marco seems to have no knowledge of the world beyond the comfort of his air-conditioned cocoon. Cleo ends up bringing him up to speed on a variety of topics, such as the plot of “Twilight,” and the proper name for a turban. By observing her older sister acting in films during the first decade of her life, Fanning seems to have acquired a level of comfort in front of the camera surpassing that of most people her age. Fanning’s effortlessly natural presence is a marvel to behold, placing her alongside the best actresses of her generation (and if last year proved anything, there are indeed plenty). Coppola also populates the film with some enjoyable cameos from Michelle Monaghan, Benicio Del Toro, and Alden Ehrenreich, the marvelous actor offered his first big break in Francis Ford Coppola’s “Tetro.” As usual, Coppola’s peerless ear for music bolsters several sequences with the work of groups such as Phoenix, Foo Fighters and The Strokes (their song, “I’ll Try Anything Once,” emerges as the film’s anthem).

“Somewhere” is presented in 1080p High Definition (with a 1.85:1 aspect ratio), accompanied by English, French and Spanish audio tracks, and includes a 17-minute making-of featurette that merely skims the surface of the production. Coppola admits that it was her intention to reconnect with her experimental roots by making a picture that was closer in style to her early short films. Co-producer G. Mac Brown notes that Coppola had previously stayed with her father in the presidential suite at Principe di Savoia, the Milanese hotel featured in the film. Cinematographer Harris Savides (“Zodiac”) says that Coppola gave him various photos of celebrities as reference points. Both Dorff and Fanning attest to their director’s calm composure on the set, which is undoubtedly reflected in her completed work. The world of “Somewhere” may appear bizarrely foreign to many viewers, but to Coppola, it’s home bittersweet home.

*‘Somewhere’ is released by Universal Home Entertainment and stars Stephen Dorff, Elle Fanning and Chris Pontius. It was written and directed by Sofia Coppola. It was released on April 19, 2011. It is rated R.*



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