



## FILM REVIEW

by Charlo Pisani

# Somewhere

**S**ofia Coppola's film *Somewhere* explores the world of showbiz by delving into those intimate instances when a famous actor is by himself.

The opening sequence lays the blueprint for the film's cinematic mood and language. Two roads split the screen diagonally. A car zooms past, flitting in and out of the frame. The camera remains motionless. The car races back in... and out again. The camera pans out and we realise the driver is going round in circles, alone, in what seems to be the Californian desert.

At a basic level, the film follows famous actor Johnny Marco (Stephen Dorff) between films while recovering from a minor hand injury. He spends most of the time by himself, travelling, checking into different hotels. On other occasions, he attends press conferences and parties where he finds his next conquest. He should be reading the new scripts that are being sent to him of course, but that matters little. From time to time, he

also receives a text message on his phone from what seems to be a stalker.

The stalker subplot, likely a major narrative driving force in most other films, is reduced to yet another incident which is touched upon transiently. Instead, *Somewhere* sees its protagonist following a more personal, existential journey in which he must decide upon what future holds—in or out of showbiz.

What holds our attention throughout the film is the close, intimate view of the protagonist, as he takes in his surroundings and the people around him. Coppola frequently keeps the camera focused on the same image after the action has finished, as if refusing the cut, thus emptying the space which nevertheless demands our attention. This way, she introverts the narrative through a repetition of stasis rather than the introduction of new action.

Luckily, Johnny's redemptive chances stare him in the face through his eleven-year-old, unspoilt, multi-talented daughter Cleo (Elle Fanning). As he comes to terms with his fatherly

<b>Somewhere</b>	
<b>Year of release:</b>	2010
<b>Director:</b>	Sofia Coppola
<b>Production company:</b>	Pathé Distribution, Medusa Film, Tohokushinsha, American Zoetrope
<b>Certification:</b>	UK 15/MPAA R

emotions, he tries to re-establish contact with his ex-wife with whom he shares custody of his daughter. In the end, Johnny ends up where he started: driving alone in the desert with a smile on his face. Did his meditative efforts lead him 'somewhere'?

While Coppola's other films, such as *Marie Antoinette* (2006), explore more elaborate aspects of gender, *Somewhere* excels in minimalist but effective cinematic language and plot. It remains one of the more engaging films in her respectable oeuvre. **T**