



STAFF PICK

Steve Martin's Shopgirl Is a Charming Indie With a Pitch-Perfect Cast

BY ASHLEY MORTON

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Take everything you might expect from a Steve Martin film and toss it aside, because *Shopgirl* is different. Though you might associate Martin with his broader comedic performances in *Roxanne*; *Father of the Bride*; *Planes, Trains and Automobiles*, and *Little Shop of Horrors*, the actor also has a noteworthy career as a writer, and *Shopgirl* is the touching adaptation of his own novella.

A love story in its simplest form, *Shopgirl*'s characters are simultaneously full of conflict but completely understandable. There is an elegance to how they are written — watching the film feels much like reading a short story, in that the audience only knows what's in front of them.

Viewers enter the film with Martin's own voice-over, introducing main character Mirabelle Buttersfield (Claire Danes), an artistic young woman from Vermont who has moved to L.A. and taken a position at Saks Fifth Avenue to pay off her student debt. She is quiet and lovely, but lonely, opening herself up to the two men who will ultimately make the biggest impact on her 28-year-old life: Jeremy (Jason Schwartzman) and Ray Porter (Martin). Jeremy is broke and directionless, with a lost-puppy expression, while Ray, wealthy and well-spoken, offers confidence and maturity, but with a certain distance.

The film has an overarching sense of gentleness: Martin's soft-spoken portrayal of Ray, Danes' sweet demeanor against the glamorous L.A. backdrop, and Schwartzman's insecure Jeremy match the graceful music and Martin's artistic direction. Although set in 2005, the film feels timeless, thanks to Mirabelle's vintage-inspired wardrobe, and the film's simple and earnest dialogue. It's as though this type of love story could happen in any year, and perhaps has happened to others before, and will happen to others after.



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