

Florida Tween Actress Ella Grace Helton Dances Her Way to Laughs in ‘Chosen Family’ Film

Young Starlet Brings Charm and Mischief in Her First Leading Role, Opposite Heather Graham and John Brotherton

ORLANDO, FL, UNITED STATES, October 14, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Brevard County-based TV and film actress Ella Grace Helton, 11, keeps things lively on screen alongside acting legends — including a memorable dance-off — in the feature film “Chosen Family,” which released Friday, Oct. 11. Audiences familiar with Helton’s sweet take on Katie Townsend in the hit Netflix show “Sweet Magnolias” have been raving about how she’s brought a feisty Lily to life in her first feature film lead role.

Known for her comedic timing and quick wit, Helton made her feature film debut opposite Adam Sandler as Jessa Phillips/mini Harley Quinn in the endearing holiday favorite “Hubie Halloween” at the age of 6. That same year, she was a series regular starring as Emily Ryan in the ABC/Sony Pictures Television sitcom “United We Fall,” opposite Will Sasso, Emmy winner Jane Curtin and Christina Vidal.

Helton’s Lily presents interesting challenges for Anne, the “Chosen Family” protagonist played by the illustrious Heather Graham, who also is the film’s writer and director. Lily is the daughter of Anne’s love interest, Steve, played by John Brotherton (“Fuller House,” “The Conjuring”). Helton said it was fun to call upon her love of dance for some of her most memorable moments in the film — a freeform dance-off with Anne, which is partially [featured in the trailer](#), and another scene that puts a spin on Helton’s ballroom dancing skills.

“Ella Grace is a wonderful actress. I feel lucky to have worked with her,” Graham said. “She is so talented in so many different ways. She’s also a lovely human being and very hard-working. She



Ella Grace Helton and Heather Graham at SLO Film Fest

is great at comedy and also powerful and poignant in the dramatic moments. She is wise beyond her years, very professional and a fun person to be around. I know she's going to have an amazing career."

About that dance-off scene: Comedic genius Thomas Lennon, creator and star of "Reno 911!" and writer of the first two "Night at the Museum" films, shared in an [interview with Screen Rant](#) how well the cast, including Helton, flowed through improv while still honoring the script. "That amazing child who's so intense and so wonderful in the movie. The dance-off sequence... Heather doing a sort of dance-off for the attention against a 10-year-old is probably my favorite scene in a movie recently."

Aside from the dance improv, Helton worked with her ballroom dance teacher to choreograph a fresh spin on the paso doble, a routine she and Brotherton rehearsed for hours.

"She's freakishly talented," Graham said about Helton in an interview with Comicbookmovie.com. "Besides being an actress, she competes in dance competitions, runs marathons, and is an amazing artist. She's really cool."

As for playing a character so unlike herself, Helton said: "It was hard to be mean to Heather because she is so nice and I've never been mischievous." She also got to live out a dream by acting as Brotherton's daughter, as she is a huge fan of his show "Fuller House."

"He's an icon and I love him," Helton said. "When I found out I was going to be working with him, my jaw dropped all the way to the floor. I was really happy."

Helton's comedic genes meant she fit right in alongside the seasoned cast, which also includes Julia Stiles ("10 Things I Hate About You," "Save the Last Dance," "The Bourne Identity"), Thomas Lennon ("Reno 911!," "Night at the Museum"), Andrea Savage ("Tulsa King," "Veep"), Michael Gross ("Family Ties," "Tremors"), Odessa Rae (Oscar-winning producer of "Navalny") and Julie Halston ("Addams Family Values," "Sex in the City.")

Helton saw the film with three theater audiences before it's wide release: She traveled to the "Chosen Family" world premiere at the Santa Barbara International Film Festival in February; to its April screening at the San Luis Obispo International Film Festival, where Graham was awarded



Ella Grace Helton and Heather Graham at SLO Film Fest-AWARD

the King Vidor Award for Excellence in Filmmaking; and to a September SAG-AFTRA Foundation screening in NYC.

"I had some great laughs in the theater from the audience, which made me feel good, and I hope audiences at home will laugh out loud, too," Helton said. "This is a fun one!"

Helton can next be seen as Katie Townsend in season 4 of "Sweet Magnolias" on Netflix in 2025. A release date hasn't been announced. Also a budding filmmaker, Helton follows this up by kicking off a busy festival season for the third short film she wrote and directed. "The Towel" will screen at three festivals this weekend. Continuing her penchant for giving back, Helton will be singing the national anthem at the Serene Harbor Purses for a Purpose fundraiser on Wednesday, Oct. 16 and soon will have news on her first original music recording.

About Chosen Family:

Yoga teacher Anne is trying to find inner peace despite having a manic family, a miserable dating life, and an inability to say no that keeps her busy trying to fix everyone else's problems. Anne's friends set her up with Steve, who has an adorable daughter, Lily. But Anne soon finds herself in a battle with this 7-year-old for Steve's attention.

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