

## Kevin Kline, John C. Reilly Are Eccentric New Yorkers in 'The Extra Man'

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on August 13, 2010 - 8:08am

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Rating: **3.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – The beauty of watching creative character actors like Kevin Kline and John C. Reilly is that they seem to revel in the craft of embodying their roles. In "The Extra Man," they both take a trippy and literate script and apply some additional magic that helps to flesh out a young man's journey into the heart of Manhattan.

Louis Ives (Paul Dano) is a twentysomething man who doesn't quite fit in this particular modern era (he channels a 1920s ethos). As a moony literature professor at a private boarding school, he secretly lusts after his female high school age students and displays a certain pan sexual quirk that to date has gone unfulfilled. After he is laid off from his teaching position, he takes a leap of faith and finally heads to his dream world of New York City, to be a real working writer and man about town.

As fate would have it, he finds a room on the upper west side of the city, with a strange man whose inquiries are instinctively passive aggressive. He is Henry Harrison (Kevin Kline), an eccentric on the upside of age sixty, continuing a peculiar city adventure by offering himself as an "extra man." He escorts rich widows to swanky society events, and partakes in the finer amenities without having to pay. Young Louis is intrigued by this, and longs for older mentor to introduce him into the extra man realm, which Henry does reluctantly and with a great deal of foppish complaining.



Just Some Gigolos: Louis Ives (Paul Dano) and Henry Harrison (Kevin Kline) in 'The Extra Man'  
Photo Credit: © Magnolia Pictures

After securing a job at an environmental magazine, Louis starts to explore the side of himself that Manhattan can easily provide. So while acclimating to his new job, attempting to connect to Henry and falling for an attractive co-worker (Katie Holmes), Louis allows himself to completely be the “man” that has been percolating inside his whole life. The consequences of that expression has implications for every person and circumstance involved, including a silent neighbor named Gershon (John C. Reilly).

This film clings tenaciously to itself, barely holding up its flimsy and derivative premise. The actors save it with their sincerity, and actually overcome some very questionable narrative motivations by going with the flow. And although on the surface it may seem that the characters are over-the-top, the deeper the actors were willing to go, the higher they flew. It gave some background players like Celia Weston, Marian Seldes and Dan Hedaya an opportunity to flex some character muscle.

Paul Dano also played something a little beyond his soft persona. He was asked to do a lot of the heavy lifting in the narrative, and his approach was consistent throughout. His namby-pamby nature and indecisiveness was somewhat annoying, but that was the point, and it did mirror a real life sensibility, where nothing is cut and dried. He created small victories, and that is enough for the journey he experiences.

John C. Reilly has a small but significant role, and after seeing him this summer in this film and “Cyrus,” his range as an actor is becoming more impressive. He is an imposing, mysterious figure in *The Extra Man*, a bicycle riding mountain man (he grew his hair and beard to extraordinary length) whose presence is silent for half of the film. When he finally speaks it is a marvelous surprise, and he then turns his character around from imposing to sympathetic.

Kevin Kline is a notable king of comedy, his turn in “A Fish Called Wanda” will resonate through the ages. His portrayal of Henry Harrison is a tad on the hambone side, but again that may be the point. The screenplay, by Robert Pulcini, Jonathan Ames and Shari Springer Berman, fusses with Kline’s character the most. Is he brain damaged? A monster? A misunderstood genius? Like a weathervane, Kline has to point in all these directions and it is distracting, although it is always a pleasure to see him working.



Mountainous: Gershon (John C. Reilly) in 'The Extra Man'  
Photo Credit: © Magnolia Pictures

The direction (by Pulcini and Berman) is choppy and haphazard, and the ending left a little to be desired – it felt like it had been changed – but it is the acting and the characters that make this small little art film a worthy contender for a number of Independent Spirit Awards. It is fun to watch them, even Katie Holmes, because you can tell they believe in what they’re doing.

And like the ladies who are escorted by the extra men, the audience is taken out for a nice little character driven experience, different from the 3D, animated, blow-up-the-world country fare of summer. Nothing wrong with that.

*“The Extra Man” continues its limited release in Chicago on August 13th. See local listings for theaters and show times. Featuring Kevin Kline, John C. Reilly, Paul Dano, Katie Holmes, Cathy Moriarty, Celia Weston, Patti D’Arbanville, Marian Seldes and Dan Hedaya. Screenplay by Robert Pulcini, Jonathan Ames and Shari Springer Berman, directed by Robert Pulcini and Shari Springer Berman. Rated “R”*



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