

Paul Rudd, Jennifer Aniston Take Funny Trip to Hippy Nirvana in ‘Wanderlust’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on February 23, 2012 - 5:59pm

- [Alan Alda](#) [2]
- [Brian Tallerico](#) [3]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [4]
- [Jennifer Aniston](#) [5]
- [Joe Lo Truglio](#) [6]
- [Jordan Peele](#) [7]
- [Justin Theroux](#) [8]
- [Kathryn Hahn](#) [9]
- [Ken Marino](#) [10]
- [Kerri Kenney-Silver](#) [11]
- [Lauren Ambrose](#) [12]
- [Malin Akerman](#) [13]
- [Michaela Watkins](#) [14]
- [Movie Review](#) [15]
- [Paul Rudd](#) [16]
- [Wanderlust](#) [17]



Rating: **3.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – David Wain’s “Wanderlust” is a deeply flawed movie. The female lead is woefully underwritten and the script pretty much falls apart at the end as characters do things they wouldn’t do and it rushes to its credits to wrap everything up in an awkward montage. But here’s the thing – it’s also DAMN funny. Much like Wain’s “Role Models,” the heavy laughter in the theater will make the flaws much easier to ignore. It could have been great but it’s just manically hysterical and fearless enough to be pretty damn good.

George (Paul Rudd) and Linda (Jennifer Aniston) have a happy marriage and the film opens with their purchase of a “micro-loft” in New York City. Into their wildly expensive and incredibly small apartment George and Linda move their lives and are instantly hit by life-changing problems. George is fired after his company faces federal investigation and Linda goes to present her incredibly depressing documentary about penguins with testicular cancer to HBO and gets rebuffed. Neither has a career prospect to pay for their trendy apartment mortgage. They do what so many have been forced to do – they pack up and leave.



Wanderlust

Photo credit: Universal

While looking for a place to sleep during their trip from New York to George’s brother in Atlanta, the pair finds the opposite of the Bates Motel in a commune called Elysium. Thinking they would just snooze in a cozy B&B, the couple is shocked first by nudist wine maker Wayne (Joe Lo

Truglio) and then by the awkward humor of Kathy (Kerry Kenney-Silver) but it's just a night. They can move on in the morning.

After barely falling asleep, George and Linda awake to a party on the first floor and the grounds around Elysium. It turns out that the place is pure hippie nirvana, including copious weed, free love, and generally peaceful vibes, man. The urbanites have a wonderful evening, enjoying the vibes of the residents Elysium like leader Seth (Justin Theroux), patriarch Carvin (Alan Alda), gorgeous Eva (Malin Akerman), aggressive Karen (Kathryn Hahn), and couple Almond (Lauren Ambrose) & Rodney (Jordan Peele). When they arrive at George's brother Rick's (Ken Marino) house the next day and are confronted by his general awfulness and that of his drunk wife (a great Michaela Watkins), they run back to Elysium and decide to move on.

Of course, what worked for one pot-tinged night doesn't always work long-term. Linda seems to take to the atmosphere quickly, even beginning a flirtation with Seth, but George doesn't fit in quite so well. He doesn't like being interrupted using the toilet (they don't believe in doors at Elysium) and can't believe he gets yelled at for swatting flies but it's even worse when Linda starts taking their side. The pair grows further apart instead of finding a common hippie goal. Meanwhile, a company wants to buy the gorgeous land on which Elysium sits and turn it into a casino.



Wanderlust

Photo credit: Universal

If it sounds crowded for a movie about wayward hippies, you're right. "Wanderlust" is an ensemble piece in the sense that each member of the talented cast doesn't so much have a character as 2-3 funny scenes. Marino & Watkins come forward to represent suburban drama in hysterical ways. Alda jumps into the spotlight a couple times in a case of perfect casting. Ambrose & Peele steal a scene and then disappear so someone else can do the same. Much like "Wet Hot American Summer," the film works because Wain knows a LOT of talented people. Theroux comes closest to stealing the piece and Rudd has arguably never been funnier but this is a true ensemble in the best sense in that everyone gets a scene or two to show their comedic skills.

Except for Jennifer Aniston. In a bizarre twist, the most tabloid-beloved star of the film is actually the most underwritten part of it. Linda is purely a plot device. She goes along with George. She doesn't. Her arc gets wrapped up. She doesn't feel once like nearly as much of a three-dimensional character as George. It's not Aniston's fault. She seems game for everything (except, notoriously, for showing her breasts) but Wain & Marino clearly enjoyed writing for Rudd & Theroux more than they did for the star of "Friends."

However, my complaint about Linda being less of a fully-realized character shouldn't hide what matters here – "Wanderlust" is funny. Often damn funny. There's a scene in which Rudd "gets dirty" in front of a mirror that had the audience I saw the film with laughing as hard as anything I can remember in years. In fact, they rolled with the whole movie. You likely will too.

"Wanderlust" stars Paul Rudd, Jennifer Aniston, Justin Theroux, Alan Alda, Malin Akerman, Ken Marino, Joe Lo Truglio, Kathryn Hahn, Kerri Kenney-Silver, Lauren Ambrose, Michaela Watkins, and Jordan Peele. It was written by David Wain & Marino and directed by Wain. It is rated R and opens on February 24th, 2012.

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