

Movie Review: '2 Days in Paris'

by David_Elliott

"2 Days in Paris" packs a lot in. At moments, you might wish Julie Delpy had spent a few days taking some stuff out.

Delpy wrote, directed, edited, composed and stars as Marion, a photographer despite her retinal birth scar. But she lives verbally, often with sex as useful syntax.

'2 DAYS IN PARIS' - Paris puts pressure on the relationship of Marion (Julie Delpy) and Jack (Adam Goldberg) while visiting her native town in '2 Days in Paris.' CNS Photo courtesy of Samuel Goldwyn Films.
RATINGS

4 STARS - Excellent.

3 STARS - Worthy.

2 STARS - Mixed.

1 STAR - Poor.

0 - Forget It (a dog.) Even more photo-snappish is lover Jack (Adam Goldberg), who jammed their visit to Venice into his tourist camera. On a brief stop in Paris, visiting Marion's parents before the couple return home to New York, Jack finds his lens is no refuge.

If not the Ugly American, Jack is certainly the big, hairy, tattooed and neurotic American. He speaks minimal French, which offends Marion's dad (Delpy's dad Albert, in the Michel Simon mode of boorish gusto). Jack keeps whining in uneasy response, feeling cornered all the time.

Marion is mainly amused and almost always talking. Delpy, who lives largely in Los Angeles, speaks savvy American English. But French is her home metier, and her big payoff scene is a cafe tirade at a former lover, almost a Napoleonic fusillade of feminist outrage.

She and Jack keep meeting her ex-lovers, who often carry a torch for her (Delpy, though age candid and gutsy as always, didn't shrink her ego for this). Jack picks up the signals, since even Marion's dad carries on like a Picasso goat (while, as her sweet mom, Marie Pillet, giggles and irons).

Jack is also a hypochondriac, spouting remarks like, "This place is like a petri dish for allergens." This adds a keen whiff of Woody Allen, with Goldberg much like Allen bulged into the body of his tag-along Tony Roberts, or Michael Murphy.

Delpy wrote cleverly, flicking zings with ease through a free spillage of seemingly caught life. And some comedy even pivots as both pro-French and anti-French. But Jack remains a caricatural New Yorker, a brainy hunk defined by phobias.

If the heavily taxed romance is amusing, the movie limps in political moments. Rote snipes about Bush and war, Marion scoring easy points against a racist cabbie, a remark about the Holocaust followed by Jack's crack "I never liked camp" (and after his protest that he isn't Jewish), fall like spitty gobs from the Eiffel Tower.

What's fun in the movie is enjoyable, like the farcical, sexy run-ins or the sly nods to "M" and "Last Tango in Paris." But it crucially lacks the balance of partners in a fully engaged contest. Jack is blighted by lack of French, and bilingual Marion hogs most of the best lines and shots (but that was also true in her witty starshine roles, vessel of female potential in Richard Linklater's "Before Sunrise," more womanly in "Before Sunset").

Frisky and compulsively Parisian, "2 Days" builds to the showdown of verbal overflow. Jack is scarcely heard, overruled by Marion's fretful, wise, forgiving voice-over. But, of course, it's "a Julie Delpy film."

A Samuel Goldwyn Films release. Director, writer: Julie Delpy. Cast: Julie Delpy, Adam Goldberg, Daniel Bruhl, Marie Pilet, Albert Delpy, Alexandre Nahon. Running time: 1 hour, 48 minutes. Rated R. 2 1/2 stars.

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