

Couple searches for place to raise child in unorthodox road comedy

Written by Kam Williams



Verona (Maya Rudolph) is six months pregnant, but it doesn't look like she put much thought into whether she was ready to bring a baby into the world. After all, she's repeatedly informed her slacker boyfriend, Burt (Jon Krasinski), that she'll never marry him.

The aspiring DJ is not exactly great father material, being an unemployed, 33 year-old college dropout who fritters away his days in such unproductive pursuits as whittling a piece of wood and taking a self-defense classes. Being older, African-American, and with a loudly-ticking, biological clock, Verona doesn't entertain the idea of an abortion, since Burt does adore her, even if the feelings ain't exactly mutual.

Besides, because the couple had moved to Colorado to be near his parents (Jeff Daniels and Catherine O'Hara), she reasonably expects to get their full support. Unfortunately, upon informing them of the impending arrival of their grandchild, Burt's racist mom rudely asks "just how black" the infant will be, while her equally-insensitive husband impulsively announces that they're moving to Belgium and have already put the house on the market.

With no reason to remain in the region, Verona and Burt decide to embark on a cross-country journey to find the perfect oasis to give their kid a wholesome "Huck Finn" childhood. And that wacky endeavor provides plenty of opportunities for levity in *Away We Go*, a screwball comedy directed by Oscar-winner Sam Mendes (for *American Beauty*).

The ensuing adventure reads like a rudderless road version of *Juno*, as it revolves around a wisecracking mom-to-be and the unfit sperm donor she doesn't really know or need. The difference with this baby mama drama is that the couple is approaching middle-age and planning to keep their little bundle of joy.

The peripatetic pair's ports-of-call include Phoenix, Madison, Montreal and Miami. And along the way they encounter a menagerie of colorful characters ranging from Verona's loose-lipped, Tourette's syndrome afflicted ex-boss (Allison Janney) to Burt's uptight, New Agey cousin (Maggie Gyllenhaal) with an Elektra complex. Meanwhile, they also confront the source of their own dysfunction only to discover that they are in fact meant for each other and to find the sweetest solution to their where to raise the baby dilemma.

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Although the resolution feels far too rushed to be convincing, the wry ride there is nonetheless delightful enough to make the trip worthwhile.

Excellent (3.5 stars)

Rated R for profanity and sexuality.

Running time: 97 minutes

Studio: Focus Features

To see a trailer for *Away We Go*, visit:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QAEZNb9w-rk>