

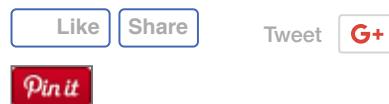


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## Film Review: Paris Can Wait

*The wife of a workaholic movie tycoon finds her inner joie de vivre thanks to a seductive Frenchman in this high-end tour of the French countryside and its culinary delights from Eleanor Coppola, elder stateswoman of the filmmaking family.*

By [Erica Abeel \(Http://Www.Filmjournal.Com/Taxonomy/Term/93\)](http://www.filmjournal.com/Taxonomy/Term/93) May 11, 2017



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*Paris Can Wait* arrives in theatres preceded by several intriguing factoids. The film is the first narrative feature directed by Eleanor Coppola, longtime wife of the illustrious Francis Ford Coppola. A documentarian noted for *Hearts of Darkness* (her doc about *Apocalypse Now*), Coppola created this first feature at the age of eighty-one. As a final teaser, *Paris* is based on a trip taken by Coppola herself in earlier years. The result is a well-crafted bagatelle about the self-renewal

of a neglected wife that hits all the Screenwriting 101 points, and also doubles as a visually delicious scenic and gastro tour of the road to Paris from the South of France.

The setup finds Anne Lockwood (Diane Lane) in Cannes with Michael, her hotshot movie producer husband (Alec Baldwin, perfect), who seems more wed to his iPhone than his wife. They're supposed to fly from Cannes to Paris (and then to Budapest for a vacay, where, of course, he'll ignore her some more), but Anne wriggles out of the flight, pleading an earache. To the rescue comes Michael's French business associate Jacques (Arnaud Viard), who offers to drive Anne to Paris. At the outset, Anne's frustration with the inattentive Michael amidst the luxury of a five-star hotel introduces a very upscale dilemma that unfortunately most of us will never have to contend with.

Faster than you can say *a bientôt*, Jacques appoints himself Anne's guide to France's gastronomic pleasures—paired with just the right wine(s)—and such sights as the Pont du Gard and Institut Lumière in Lyon, dedicated to cinema's pioneers. Over the 48 hours, sly Jacques works in an overnight at a *hotel du charme* and a spontaneous riverside picnic, as Anne hikes an eyebrow—her signature gesture—at his come-ons, or swoons over the *crème brûlée*, though Jacques would prefer she swoon over something different. Not surprisingly, the route is strewn with his old girlfriends available for a quick shag.

Leaking innuendo at every turn, Jacques is so stereotypical a Frenchman he'd be banned from a Hallmark movie. Even his accent sounds parodic. With all its hardcore food porn, *Paris* plays like a cross between Luca Guadagnino's *I Am Love* and one of Michael Winterbottom's "Trip to" food journeys with Steve Coogan (but minus the hilarious imitations of Michael Caine). Overall, *Paris* could be a relic from those elder-chick flicks of yesteryear for romance-deprived widows.

This is not to say *Paris* isn't watchable. Coppola hits all her points: Touching confessions are tendered, tears shed, intimacy sown. Jacques even encourages all those damn photos Anne keeps snapping (most shockingly in the great Romanesque church of Vezelay). What keeps the film aloft is the question: Will Anne, a buttoned-up, loyal wife, succumb to Jacques' campaign? The dialogue ranges from cringe-making flattery from Jacques—"We both know better than to miss this moment"—to Anne's wonderment that the French care so much about what they put in their mouths.

Viard's acting range, which for all I know is considerable, is limited in this film to the knowing leer. Happily, Lane makes for a radiant screen presence, investing this underemployed woman—a poor little rich wife—with considerable charm. However flat the character, Lane makes you want to stay the journey—and sample some of that *crème brûlée*. Yet Anne seems almost a throwback to an era when women clipped their own creativity to become an adjunct to a husband's ambitions and raise a family. To judge by *Paris*, an ongoing theme in films by the Coppola women is the plight of lost, slightly adrift women who are surrounded—and buffeted—by enormous privilege. Anne might be Marie Antoinette lost in a road movie.

Click [here \(http://www.imdb.com/title/tt4429194/?ref=fn\\_al\\_tt\\_1\)](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt4429194/?ref=fn_al_tt_1) for cast and crew information.

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