

Love Asexual Style

Jennifer Aniston and Paul Rudd shine as platonic admirers in a mixed-orientation romance

BY WILL O'BRYAN

At first glance, this movie looks dangerous. A romantic comedy about a gay man and a straight woman with a seemingly happy ending is a script the Promise Keepers could run with.

Merrily, though, *The Object of My Affection* is a healthy film that won't win any ex-gay ministry film awards. The story delves into the subject of platonic friendships and how those bonds can fall short of—or surpass—what sociology has told us to look forward to: marriage, of one sort or another.

In this case, it's specifically illustrated with gay George (Paul Rudd) and straight Nina

maces, lip biting, brow furrowing and other trademark facial expressions that have taken her so very far on *Friends*, definitely emotes a screen presence. This presence would have been equally at home on a "very special" two-hour episode of *Friends*, but if it ain't broke don't fix it.

Aniston's context, instead of being a wacky sitcom, is Rudd. A bit more brooding than Aniston (which isn't saying much), Rudd couldn't steal any scenes opposite her, but their chemistry together is moving. Rudd's more serious acting style gives them both more depth and quells any foreboding that Ross or some

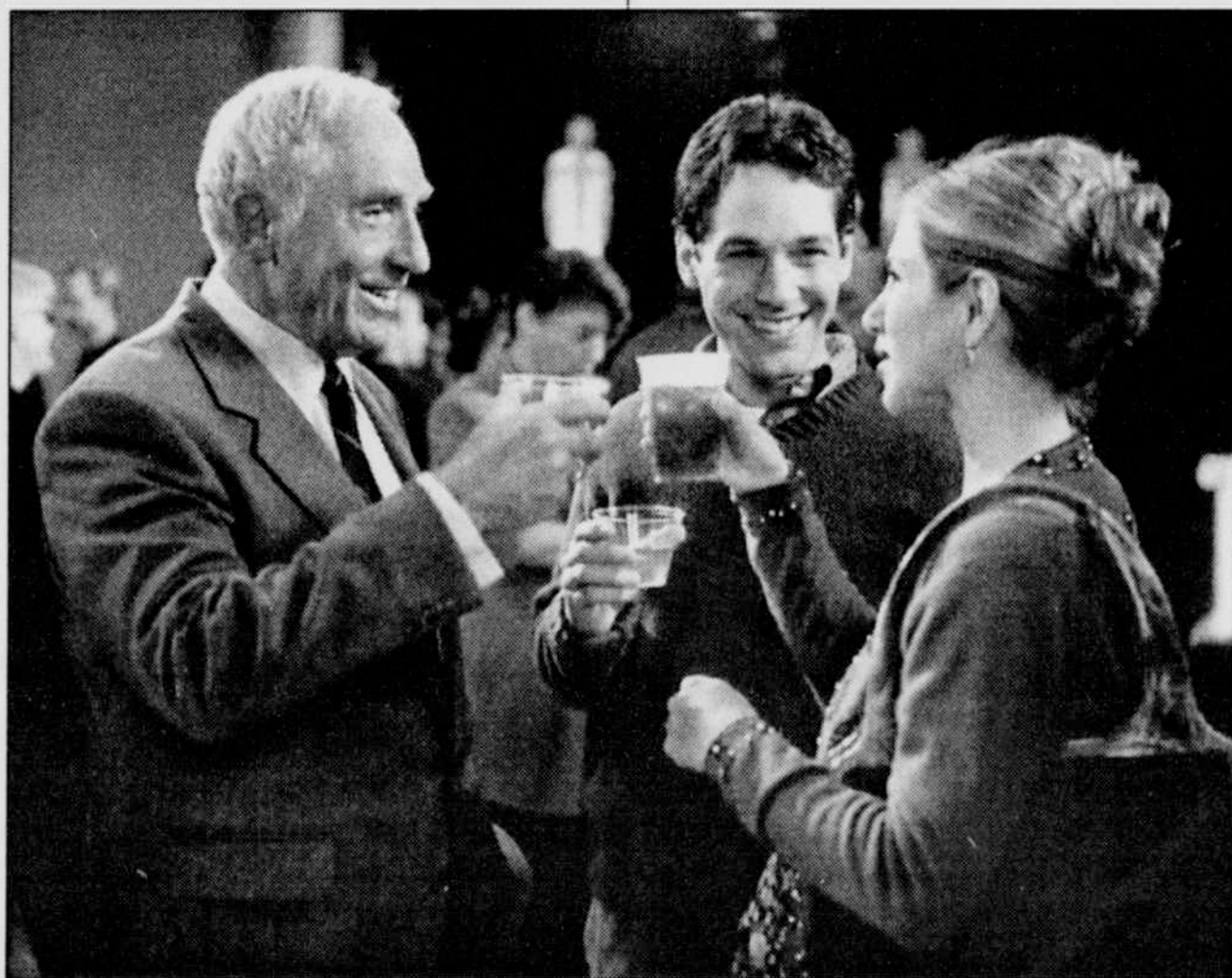


PHOTO BY BARRY WETCHER

From left: Nigel Hawthorne, Paul Rudd and Jennifer Aniston

(Jennifer Aniston). To fuel the plot and formulate a worthwhile statement, the story is obligated to leave their love unrequited. In all other ways, these characters may as well be married.

The story, originally written by Stephen McCauley and adapted by Wendy Wasserstein, attempts to break down the marriage relationship into core elements and weigh sex's value in that equation. George and Nina don't have sex, but they do have intimacy. They also have an emotional support system, shared rent, common recreational activities, etc.

With this domestic security established, the fate of these two "lovers" remains up in the air. Will George repress his homosexuality in return for a life with Nina? Will Nina realize she can't repress her sexual feelings for George? As has already been hinted, this tale doesn't end with repression. While the protagonists each realize their sexuality (and its orientation) is as much an unchangeable part of themselves as their desire to love, honor and cherish each other, it's fair to say that no one walks away mad.

Indeed, this movie has an ending so happy it borders on corny. The bit of fluff at the end is earned, though. Most of the movie is intelligent and well-written. Any movie whose running punch line involves King Hussein and Queen Noor must have some degree of sophistication. Ditto for having Academy Award nominee Nigel Hawthorne in the cast.

Director Nicholas Hytner drew some fairly shiny performances from less lofty cast members as well. Aniston, while employing the gri-

other member of the *Friends* gang might come waltzing on screen at any moment.

Tim Daly, as George's ex, is a caricature of a shallow, rich, attractive gay man. He is comic, but two-dimensional.

Nina's boyfriend, played by John Pankow, reveals a little bit more than Daly. His character, a largely well-meaning bully, is confronted with some emotionally gripping situations and he does them justice.

Amo Gulinello makes his silver screen debut as Paul, George's new love interest. Surrounded by more recognizable faces and with not too much to say, Gulinello seems to be just eye candy with a very sweet face.

One actor who does steal Aniston's spotlight is Allison Janney. She has the bitchiest lines, advocating what many in the audience will be thinking. At first seeming like a shrew, Janney forces her character, Constance, to become human enough to deliver cruel lines without alienating the audience.

Spring is a good season for mainstream romantic comedies. The best of them are worthwhile, but not too heavy; happy, but not altogether unbelievable.

So it is with *The Object of My Affection*, which has the added bonus that you won't have to pretend the opposite-sex protagonists are the same sex to make it enjoyable.

■ *THE OBJECT OF MY AFFECTION* opens Friday, April 17, at area ACT III Theaters.

YOU'RE SITTING ON A GOLD MINE!

FIND IT IN THE **pocketbook** RESOURCE GUIDE

Lombard
FLOWERS

Proudly Serving
The Greater
Portland Metro Area

503/ 286~1330

Located in Historic St. Johns

8302 N. LOMBARD • PORTLAND, OREGON 97203

ARTISTS REPERTORY THEATRE

1516 SW Alder Street



...middle-class boulevard comedy
(infidelity, adultery, mistaken identity)...

...an alternately hilarious and ferocious farce...

~The New York Times

INDISCRETIONS
BY JEAN COCTEAU APRIL 7
DIRECTED BY JON KRETZU THROUGH MAY 17

503/241-1ART

Contains brief nudity and adult subject matter.

Media Sponsor

just out