

REESE WITHERSPOON AS
CHERYL STRAYED



INTO THE WILD

Wild is a visually stunning, if somewhat light, companion to Cheryl Strayed's memoir

Cheryl Strayed's *Wild* is a story in which many of us can find a hook that reaches out and sinks into our skin, whether it's the delicately imploding marriage, the rage, the grief, the attempts to find a way out of oneself, the knowledge that you've lost your way or the satisfaction that comes from letting go.

Graceful yet unsatisfying, director Jean-Marc Vallée's adaptation of *Wild* works hard to fit in all these things — the moments of doubt and sadness and forgiveness — that

Strayed laid out so beautifully, so carefully, in her bestselling memoir about hiking more than 1,000 miles on the Pacific Crest Trail. The hike was process, penance, challenge and more, a physical journey that forced an interior one.

One of these journeys is easier to depict than the other. *Wild* starts in the middle, with a burst of pain and fury, and works its way back through all the important moments: Strayed as a child with an intensely loving

mother (Laura Dern); Strayed as a young wife, devastated by grief, destroying her marriage to a man named Paul (Thomas Sadoski); and, mostly, Strayed (Reese Witherspoon) as a woman alone on the Pacific Crest Trail, half-hidden under a giant backpack, questioning her decision every painful step of the way.

The hike is the best part of the movie, its backbone and center. The visual transformation of the landscape, from dry California desert to lush Oregon forest, is an obvious and beautiful parallel to Strayed's own metamorphosis. She meets friendly hikers, a well-intentioned good ol' boy, an oblivious reporter and a pair of hunters so malicious the scene is deeply uncomfortable to watch. (The one time she encounters another female hiker, both radiate delight.) She rolls into Ashland right after Jerry Garcia's death, and if the hippie vibes seem a little overwrought, at least we briefly get Michiel Huisman's pretty face as a distraction.

Screenwriter Nick Hornby weaves the backstory in as a series of looping (and neatly edited) flashbacks, and while the images are full of difficult things, there's a dreamy gauziness to them that keeps the reality of what happened from having enough weight. The facts are heavy, gritty and undeniable, but the story never stays with them very long; they seem like ages-ago wisps, not part of the weight Strayed carried for all those miles.

Wild is still a good movie — and, as a film entirely about a young woman and her decisions, something of a rare bird. Witherspoon, though her hair be ever too clean, gives a solid performance, and a whole host of recognizable faces have small roles (including Everclear's Art Alexakis as a stoic tattooist).

Movies are very rarely better than their books, but this isn't a competitor to the book so much as a companion piece, a way to revisit the story with a new and glorious visual element. Will it make you want to go for a hike? Probably. But maybe not quite such a long one. (*Regal Valley River & Cinemark 17*) ■

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ANNIE (2014) (DIG) (PG)
 10:35, 1:35, 4:25, 7:25, 10:15

BIG EYES (DIG) (PG-13)
 11:15, 2:00, 4:55, 7:45, 10:20

BIG HERO 6 (DIG) (PG)
 10:40, 1:30, 4:10, 6:55, 9:45

EXODUS: GODS AND KINGS (3D) (PG-13)
 SPECIAL EVENT PRICING: \$3.00
 UPCHARGE ALL TICKETS
 11:25, 7:00, 10:25

EXODUS: GODS AND KINGS (DIG) (PG-13)
 3:05

THE GAMBLER (DIG) (R)
 11:10, 1:55, 4:45, 7:35, 10:25

HOBBIT: THE BATTLE OF THE FIVE ARMIES (3D) (PG-13)
 SPECIAL EVENT PRICING: \$3.00
 10:00, 11:40, 1:20, 3:00, 4:40, 7:10, 9:40, 10:30

HOBBIT: THE BATTLE OF THE FIVE ARMIES (DIG) (PG-13)
 12:30, 3:50, 6:20, 8:00

HORRIBLE BOSSES 2 (DIG) (R)
 7:50, 10:30

HUNGER GAMES: THE MOCKINGJAY, PART 1 (DIG) (PG-13)
 10:15, 1:15, 4:15, 7:15, 10:10

THE IMITATION GAME (DIG) (PG-13)
 11:05, 1:50, 4:35, 7:30, 10:15

INTO THE WOODS (DIG) (PG)
 10:05, 1:00, 4:00, 7:05, 10:00

NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM: SECRET OF THE TOMB (DIG) (PG)
 10:00, 10:30, 11:35, 1:05, 2:05, 3:45, 4:50, 6:25, 7:40, 9:00, 10:20

THE PENGUINS OF MADAGASCAR (DIG) (PG)
 10:00, 12:25, 2:50, 5:20

ST. VINCENT (DIG) (PG-13)
 10:10, 4:20, 10:05

THE THEORY OF EVERYTHING (DIG) (PG-13)
 1:25, 7:05

UNBROKEN (DIG) (PG-13)
 11:30, 2:55, 7:00, 10:10

WILD (DIG) (R)
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CHEF
 7:10

22 JUMP STREET
 7:10*

MAGIC IN THE MOONLIGHT
 9:15†

THE SKELETON TWINS
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