

**ELLA & JOHN****2017**

112 minutes

Directed by **Paolo Virzi**

Starring: Helen Mirren, Donald Sutherland

It's an average morning in the town of Wellesley, Massachusetts, when a middle-aged man flips up the garage door outside his parents' quiet home. What he sees there freezes his blood and has him fumbling for his phone. The garage is empty; the camper-van has vanished. "Mom and Dad are gone!" he wails. "And you won't believe this - so is the Leisure Seeker!"

Ella and John Spencer are ambling out of New England in their 1975 Winnebago, pointed south on Route 1 on a mission to visit Hemingway's house in Key West. They're cruising through red-state USA.

The Leisure Seeker has many miles to cover, which leaves the audience plenty of time to get to know Ella and John.

John has symptoms consistent with Alzheimer's disease, although that term is never used. And Ella, nursing her pain with a steady stream of whiskey, is clearly dying; the diagnosis will be obvious to viewers long before the film reveals it. "The Leisure Seeker" becomes a defense of their right to live their last days as they see fit — on the road instead of in nursing homes or hospitals.

Critics' comments:

- There are quieter moments during which the glances between Sutherland and Mirren - containing memories better left unvoiced - suggest something worthier than the dreck they're trapped in.

(Time Out - April 13, 2018)

- 'The Leisure Seeker' deserves credit for tackling a difficult subject. Unfortunately it comes packaged in a clumsy road movie headed the wrong way down the highway.

(Detroit News - March 23, 2018)

Thankfully Sutherland and Mirren prop up the film despite its tonal disparity.

But the couple's spirited performance can't rise above a film that covers some fairly depressing material. *(New Zealand Herald - June 21, 2018)*

Come for Mirren and Sutherland's performances and you won't be disappointed, but don't expect to be impressed by much else.

(Stuff.co.nz - June 21, 2018)