

A REAL PAIN

USA/Poland (2024) 90 minutes

Director: Jesse Eisenberg

Cast: Jesse Eisenberg (David Kaplan)
Kieran Culkin (Benji Kaplan)
Jennifer Grey (Marcia)



Screening 7th January 2026 at Swindon Arts Centre

Synopsis

Two mis-matched cousins reunite for a Jewish heritage tour through Poland in honour of their late grandmother, a Holocaust survivor but their old tensions resurface against the backdrop of their family history.

Reviews



It's a slip of a thing, clocking in at a tight 90 minutes; a deft, light-footed amalgamation of two potentially formulaic comedy genres: the road movie and the mismatched buddy flick.

For better or worse, Benji leaves a mark on the other members of the tour group. David barely registers as an afterthought. But the social ease with which Benji is blessed doesn't mean that he is at peace as a person. Quite the opposite. The lack of filter that permits him to break the ice and bond with strangers also means that he lashes out indiscriminately – at the hapless British tour guide; at his cousin, for having the temerity to move on with his life and start a family; at his fellow travellers and the inherent tackiness of luxury trauma tourism.

Wendy Ide, Press Reader

There's enough pain on display in Jesse Eisenberg's crackling comedy *A Real Pain* to keep numerous therapists busy for years...

It's a cavalcade of angst and agony, from the familial to the historical, with an occasionally quite bleak assessment of the human condition. Nevertheless, it's also levitated by a truly joyful sense of humour that puts up a good fight against the story's darker moments without trying to joke them into irrelevance.

David is a knotted-up reed of stammering, compulsive worry in the shape of an urban professional who can never get anything out of his head long enough to enjoy anything. Benji is a sad-eyed slacker whose unease doesn't roll inside but explodes out as attention-grabbing manias that make clear that he will be sewing chaos at every step of the trip.

Things come to a head fast after the cousins join up with their tour group in Poland...

Chris Barsanti, Slant

Film Facts

- Kieran Culkin won the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor.
- Jesse Eisenberg was nominated for Best Original Screenplay.

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