

Planes, Trains and Automobiles (1987)

*Planes, Trains and Automobiles* is one of the funniest anti-buddy/odd couple road films of the 80's. It tells the story of two opposite characters in which fate brings them together during Thanksgiving weekend. Neal Page is a marketing executive who is a clean shaven businessman, impatient and extremely arrogant. Del is a traveling shower curtain rings salesman who is large, wears mismatched shirts and coats and can be extremely annoying. Both of these men are loving husbands and are planning to head home for the Thanksgiving holiday. But these two opposites will have to endure each other's different personalities and bad habits as they travel together through numerous adventures. Del is a nice enough man who only wants to satisfy Neal and yet Neal just wants to be left alone.

In many ways is a critique on the differences between the lower-class and upper-class cultures. Neal is an upper-class snob who doesn't have any patience and always expects to get his way, where Neal is more a lower-class individual who travels on the road and knows numerous friends and acquaintances. The opening shot of the film shows an expensive watch of Neal's and when Neal gets on an airplane there is a mistake and he is asked to sit in coach even though he insists his tickets are for first class. Within the readings of Ina Rae Hark it was during the 80's that the road films greatly shifted tone because the American culture greatly shifted

tone. When the Vietnam War ended and Richard Nixon resigned office the rebellious alienated films like *Easy Rider*, *Two-Way Blacktop* and *Bonnie and Clyde* started to slowly fade away. In the 80s gas prices rose, Capitalism changed under Reagan, hitch-hiking now was looked upon as more dangerous and with the creation of the blockbusters in the late 70's early 80's; road films offered more laughs and were not so tense and bleak as they used to be.

Even though this film is a comedy several themes of the film are similar to other road films like *Rain Man* and *Midnight Run* in which one of the main characters goes through a drastic change and becomes a much better person at the end of their journey together. At the end of the film when Neil realizes how fortunate he is compared to Del he decides to change his yuppie snobbish ways and learns to be kind to Del. He decides to sell his expensive watch to get the money for the two of them to drink together at an in bar room of a hotel. Realizing that Del has no family or home and that his wife is in fact deceased he invites Del to his home for Thanksgiving dinner to be with him and his family. This is a classic comedy that also has a sweet tender side on how the snobbish yuppie upper-class can eventually accept the poor working class slob and they both can learn to accept each other's differences.