



FILM REVIEW: The French Dispatch (Wes Anderson, 2021)

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THE FRENCH

DISPATCH. (Photo Courtesy of Searchlight Pictures. © 2020 Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation All Rights Reserved)

Posted by Larry Gleeson

Searchlight Pictures and Indian Paintbrush's American Empirical Picture presents Wes Anderson's, *The French Dispatch*, being hailed as Anderson's love letter to a fading vocation and literary form – magazine journalism. The *French Dispatch* brings to life a collection of stories from the final issue of a widely circulated American magazine, The French Dispatch (the film's title) published in a fictional 20th-century French city, Ennui-sur-Blase?.



(From L-R): Elisabeth

Moss, Owen Wilson, Tilda Swinton, Fisher Stevens and Griffin Dunne in the film *THE FRENCH DISPATCH*. (Photo Courtesy of Searchlight Pictures. © 2020 Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation All Rights Reserved)

On the occasion of the death of its beloved Kansas-born editor Arthur Howitzer, Jr., portrayed by Bill Murray, his hand-picked staff—including the Cartoonist (Jason Schwartzman), the Story Editor (Fisher Stevens), the Legal Advisor (Griffin Dunne), the Copy Editor (Elisabeth Moss), the Proofreader (Anjelica Bette Fellini) and a cheery Writer Wally Wolodarsky – who has haunted the French Dispatch offices for years but never written a single word – assembles over the body to collaborate on an obituary.

They are led by Howitzer's beloved writers, who he coddled and encouraged, and dressed down and built up, earning him their devotion and their love: Herbsaint Sazerac (Owen Wilson), the intrepid Cycling Reporter, drawn to the most unsettling and unsavory aspects of the far-flung cities he visits...J.K.L. Berendsen (Tilda Swinton), the critic and chronicler on intimate terms with every side of the modern art world...Lucinda Krementz (Frances McDormand), the solitary essayist who guards her journalistic integrity as closely as her private passions...and Roebuck Wright (Jeffrey Wright), the lonely expatriate polymath with a typographic memory, discovered and rescued by Howitzer under humiliating circumstances.

Memories of Howitzer flow into the creation of four stories: a travelogue of the seediest sections of the city itself from *The Cycling Reporter*; “The Concrete Masterpiece,” about a criminally insane painter, his guard and muse, and his ravenous dealers; “Revisions to a Manifesto,” a chronicle of love and death on the barricades at the height of student revolt; and “The Private Dining Room of the Police Commissioner.”



Timothée Chalamet and

Lyna Khoudri in the film *THE FRENCH DISPATCH*. (Photo Courtesy of Searchlight Pictures. © 2021 20th Century Studios All Rights Reserved)

The creative team behind *The French Dispatch* included Wes Anderson, executive producer Roman Coppola, director of photography Robert Yeoman A.S.C., production designer Adam Stockhausen, costume designer Milena Canonero, editor Andrew Weisblum, and composer Alexandre Desplat. The film also stars Liev Schreiber (*Showtime's Ray Donovan*, *SPOTLIGHT*, *ISLE OF DOGS*), Edward Norton (*BIRDMAN*, *THE GRAND BUDAPEST HOTEL*), Willem Dafoe (*THE LIGHTHOUSE*, *SPIDERMAN*), Saoirse Ronan (*LITTLE WOMEN*, *LADY BIRD*), Christoph Waltz (*DJANGO UNCHAINED*), Henry Winkler (*Arrested Development*, *Barry*, *Happy Days*), and Anjelica Huston (*ISLE OF DOGS*, *THE ADDAMS FAMILY*) as the Narrator.

The French Dispatch is definitely Wes Anderson fare for his loyal followers. It's strongly written with humor intricately woven into the artsy cinematography/production design. Anderson professed his love for the *New Yorker Magazine* and the influence shines brightly through in *The French Dispatch's* witty dialogue. Anderson is credited with the screenplay as well as directing. And....oh, what a cast! The creme de la creme. It's such a treat watching their characters interact delivering deadpan humor that's sure to keep any literary mind off-balance. *The French Dispatch* is an avant-garde delicacy. Highly

recommended!

Category

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Author

hollywoodglee