



NEW RELEASES

The French Dispatch

Wes Anderson's films have always had a Russian doll quality, containing tales within tales within tales, but his new anthology film *The French Dispatch* takes his love of storytelling to another level. 'I had three different things I wanted to do,' Anderson tells me on a windy rooftop terrace in Cannes after the film's premiere, which was delayed for more than a year due to the pandemic.

'One, I wanted to do a collection of short stories. Two, I wanted to do a movie about a magazine. Three, I wanted to make a French movie, set in France, with some of my favourite French actors. So I put them all together.'

The result is an issue-turned-film of the titular *French Dispatch of the Liberty, Kansas Sun* – a weekly magazine published from the Paris-inspired but Andersonian fictional city of Ennui-sur-Blasé. The magazine within the film comprises an 'Obituary, a Travel Guide and Three Features'. But in reality, each feature darts off into other stories, be they capers, reports of kidnappings or profiles of larger-than-life characters.

The French Dispatch itself is inspired by the *New Yorker*, of which Anderson has been a devoted reader since his teens. Each feature is told through the eyes of a different journalist: Tilda Swinton's art writer J.K.L. Berensen; Frances McDormand's reporter Lucinda Krementz, who captures the 1968-pastiched protests in the film; and the James Baldwin-esque Roebuck Wright, played by a melancholy Jeffrey Wright. Each segment has its own ensemble cast, with many Anderson regulars (Owen Wilson, Adrien Brody) and just as many newcomers (Timothée Chalamet, Benicio Del Toro, Léa Seydoux and more). Meanwhile, *The French Dispatch*'s zealous editor Arthur Howitzer Jr (Bill Murray) is modelled on the *New Yorker*'s mercurial caretaker Harold Ross, although Howitzer's motto, 'no crying', could equally refer to a certain director who carefully rations sentiment and emotion. 'Cut it!' Howitzer orders in one scene about a line in an article: 'It makes me too sad.'

The anthology format has given Anderson a new sense of freedom: 'At a certain point I decided: we can do whatever we want. If we want to tell part of the story in black and white, we'll do it. If we want to switch back to colour for a scene – because it tells us something – well, then, we'll go back to colour.' In addition to the palette changes, there are moments when the film switches into widescreen (inspired by French anamorphic format Franscope) and, in some of the most dazzling scenes, turns completely animated in a nod to the film's shooting location, Angoulême, and its status as the French 'capital of cartoons' (the scenes were created by local animators). 'Audiences are used to so many different formats and images [being] presented to them in so many different ways now,' says Anderson. 'I feel they can take in a lot of information and changes. Maybe I overdo it? I'm sure I overdo it.'

Isabel Stevens, *Sight and Sound*, November 2021

Constructing the fictional city of Ennui-sur-Blasé

From the island of New Penzance (*Moonrise Kingdom*, 2012) to the Republic of Zubrowka (*The Grand Budapest Hotel*, 2014) and the Japanese city Megasaki (*Isle of Dogs*, 2018), the fictional worlds of Wes Anderson have only increased in scale and ambition over the last decade. His latest is the imaginary city of Ennui-sur-Blasé, a name that translates literally as ‘Boredom-on-Jaded’. Reportedly, the name was Jason Schwartzman’s idea: ‘He just said it’. Ennui is a seedy, noir-ish metropolis heavily inspired by Paris, but the film’s actual setting is the Roman city of Angoulême in the south-west. Anderson stumbled on it while travelling around France in June 2018, looking for locations with his regular production designer Adam Stockhausen. ‘What’s great about the city is all the different levels. It’s an old city on a hill with steps and steep roads, and places where one road goes up above all the others, while another road dips down below and you can see them all in the same frame. You can look at the city not just on a map, but vertically. You can see different levels of it all at once.’

The district of Paris that Ennui was based on wasn’t, as you might assume, hilly Montmartre with its belle époque artistic associations, but Ménilmontant, a few kilometres to the south-east, the setting of *The Red Balloon* (1956): ‘The area still exists but the whole neighbourhood was more or less razed,’ Anderson explains. ‘All the old buildings were knocked down and replaced by a park.’

The French Dispatch starts with a report from cycling correspondent Sazerac (Owen Wilson), who takes us on a tour of Ennui. ‘There are so many different moments in the city that he shows us,’ Anderson says, ‘and they are inspired by the street photography of Eugène Atget and Charles Marville and by movies, like those by Tati. We looked at old pictures of Angoulême, of parts of the town that had changed a bit, and we used existing places and built around them, or often we used spaces that we saw and made something completely different in them. We made storefronts and we arranged buildings in the foreground and the background. Often we were designing sets based on existing bits of civic architecture – streets and staircases and bridges. Sometimes we did things like build a bridge up on a scaffolding, so that the camera sees something at eye level that normally you have to look up at.’

A central source of inspiration for Ennuisur-Blasé – and particularly Sazerac’s opening tour – was Luc Sante’s 2015 book *The Other Paris*, which explores a near-vanished bohemian Paris. Looking at the images of the French capital in the early 19th century made him think of French movies: ‘Sometimes you see something in an old movie and you actually don’t really understand what kind of place you’re in or what it means. It’s taken for granted you would understand, but in fact all these years later it doesn’t exist in our lives. It reminded me of a scene in one of Marcel Pagnol’s movies where a character is selling “violet”. I thought, “That’s odd that she’s selling flowers on a dock by a fish market.” But violet are actually a type of seafood, a bit like oysters. I’ve asked people in France about them but they haven’t heard of them. They

aren't eaten much any more. I tried one once and they're very strange and strong.'

Wes Anderson on French Movie Influences

Lots of French movies came into the mix for this. The Benicio Del Toro and Léa Seydoux story was influenced by early French talking cinema going back to *David Golder* [1931] and other Julien Duvivier movies, and Jean Grémillon's *La Petite Lise* [1930], which Leos Carax refers to in *Mauvais sang* [1986]. Michel Simon in *Boudu Saved from Drowning* [1932] was a key inspiration for Benicio Del Toro in the first story as well. The middle part, with Frances McDormand and Timothée Chamalet, we were thinking of the *nouvelle vague* but also *cinéma du look*; early Leos Carax but also Luc Besson and Jean-Jacques Beineix (who are obviously quite different from Carax, but there was a moment when they were all making something that we hadn't seen in French cinema before). And then I knew I wanted to make a French noir.

That's I think what the last part of the film is, the Jeffrey Wright/Mathieu Amalric part. There I was thinking of French crime movies and *policiers* like Jacques Becker's *Touchez pas au grisbi* [1954], and Clouzot's *L'Assassin habite au 21* [1942], and the Maigret [the fictional French police detective created by Georges Simenon] that's a Duvivier, *La Tête d'un homme* [1933]. Michel Simon I love so much, especially in *Boudu*, which Benicio loved, too; but also *L'Atalante* [1934] and *Panique* [1946] and *La Chienne* [1931]. Who can you compare him to? He's hysterically funny, and he's a powerhouse. In *Boudu*, he's not guileless, but he's not sly; he's almost completely selfish, but he's not unkind; he's charming, but he's a wrecking machine; he's cheery, but he's very moody.

French cinema invited me to France, and I've sort of stayed there ever since.

***Sight and Sound*, November 2021**

THE FRENCH DISPATCH OF THE LIBERTY KANSAS EVENING SUN

Directed by: Wes Anderson
©: Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation, TSG Entertainment Finance LLC, TFD Productions LLC
An American Empirical picture
Presented by: Searchlight Pictures, Indian Paintbrush
Executive Producers: Roman Coppola, Henning Molfenter, Christoph Fisser, Charlie Woebcken
Produced by: Wes Anderson, Steven Rales, Jeremy Dawson
Co-producer: Octavia Peissel
Line Producer: Frédéric Blum
Associate Producers: John Peet, Ben Adler
Production Co-ordinator: Ségolène Lagny
Unit Manager: Bertrand Girard
Location Manager: Alexis Sarraf
Post Producer: Gisela Evert
Special Photography Unit: Roman Coppola
2nd Unit Director: Martin Scali
1st Assistant Director: Ben Howard
2nd Assistant Director: Charlie Vaughan
Continuity: Jackson Malle, Molly Rosenblatt
US Casting by: Douglas Aibel
French Casting by: Antoinette Boulat
UK Casting by: Jina Jay
Screenplay by: Wes Anderson
Story by: Wes Anderson, Roman Coppola, Hugo Guinness, Jason Schwartzman
Director of Photography: Robert Yeoman
Miniature Unit Cinematographer: Tristan Oliver
Steadicam Operator: Sanjay Sami
1st Assistant Camera: Vincent Scotet
Gaffer: Grégory Fromentin
Key Grip: Sanjay Sami
Visual Effects Producer: Wendy Garfinkle
Visual Effects by: Rise Visual Effects
Animatic Editor: Edward Bursch
Special Effects Supervisor: Jean-Christophe Magnaud
Special Effects: Big Bang SFX
Miniatures Supervisor: Simon Weisse
Animation Design/Supervisor: Gwenn Germain
Editor: Andrew Weisblum
Associate Editor: Stephen Perkins
Production Designer: Adam Stockhausen
Supervising Art Director: Stéphane Cressend
Art Directors: Loïc Chavanon, Kevin Timon Hill, Alice Leconte
Set Decorator: Rena De Angelo
Lead Graphic Designer: Erica Dorn
Rosenthaler Paintings by: Sandro Kopp
Hermès Jones Drawings by: Javi Aznarez
Berensen Slide Photographs by: Katerina Jebb
Storyboard Artist: Jay Clarke
Property Master: Eckart Friz
Costume Designer: Milena Canonero
Assistant Costume Designer: Raffaella Fantasia
Costume Supervisor: Patricia Colin
Hair and Make-up Designer: Frances Hannon
Music by: Alexandre Desplat
Piano Solos Performed by: Jean Yves Thibaudet
‘Aline’ Sung as ‘Tip-top’ by: Jarvis Cocker
Original Music Orchestrated and Conducted by: Conrad Pope
Simone Poses Choreographer: Philippe Decouflé
‘Sans Blague’ Choreographer: Laura Bachman
Sound Mixer: Jean-Paul Mugel
Boom Operator: Damien Luquet
Re-recording Mixers: Wayne Lemmer, Christopher Scarabosio
Re-recording Mixer: Craig Berkey
Supervising Sound Editors: Wayne Lemmer, Christopher Scarabosio
Dialogue Editor: Susan Dawes
Stunt Co-ordinator: Dominique Fouassier
Literary Consultant: David Brendel

Cast

‘The Concrete Masterpiece’
Benicio Del Toro (Moses Rosenthaler)
Adrien Brody (Julian Cadazio)
Tilda Swinton (J.K.L. Berensen)
Léa Seydoux (Simone)

‘Revisions to a Manifesto’
Frances McDormand (Lucinda Kremenz)
Timothée Chalamet (Zeffirelli)
Lyna Khoudri (Juliette)

‘The Private Dining Room of the Police Commissioner’
Jeffrey Wright (Roebuck Wright)
Mathieu Amalric (The Commissaire)
Steve Park (Lieutenant Nescaffier)

‘Obituary’
Bill Murray (Arthur Howitzer Jr)

‘The Cycling Reporter’
Owen Wilson
(Herbsaint Sazerac, cycling report)

Bob Balaban (Uncle Nick)
Henry Winkler (Uncle Joe)
Lois Smith (Upshur Clampette ‘Maw’)
Tony Revolori (young Moses Rosenthaler)
Denis Ménochet (prison guard)
Larry Pine (chief magistrate)
Morgane Polanski (girlfriend)
Félix Moati (head caterer)
Mohamed Belhadjine (Mitch-Mitch)
Nicolas Avinée (Vittel)
Christoph Waltz (Paul Duval)
Cécile de France (Mrs B)
Guillaume Gallienne (Mr B)
Rupert Friend (drill-sergeant)
Alex Lawther (Morisot)
Tom Hudson (Mitch-Mitch on stage)
Lily Taïeb (Juliette’s friend)
Stéphane Bak (communications specialist)
Hippolyte Girardot (Chou-fleur)
Liev Schreiber (talk show host)
Willem Dafoe (Albert ‘the Abacus’)
Edward Norton (The Chauffeur)
Saoirse Ronan (junkie/showgirl 1)
Winsen Ait Hellal (Gigi)
Mauricette Coudivat (Maman)
Damien Bonnard (police detective)
Rodolphe Pauly (Patrolman Maupassant)
Antonia Desplat (junkie/showgirl 2)
Elisabeth Moss (Alumna, copy editor)
Jason Schwartzman (Hermès Jones, cartoonist)
Fisher Stevens (story editor)
Griffin Dunne (legal adviser)
Pablo Pauly (waiter)
Wally Wolodarsky (cheery writer)
Anjelica Bette Fellini (proofreader)
Anjelica Huston (narrator)
Gilles Gauthier (man with camera)

USA/Germany/France 2020
108 mins

A Fox Searchlight Pictures release

NEW RELEASES

Never Gonna Snow Again (Sniegu juz nigdy nie bedzie)
From Fri 22 Oct
The French Dispatch
From Fri 29 Oct
Petite Maman
From Fri 26 Nov
Rebel Dykes
From Fri 26 Nov (+ Q&A Fri 26 Nov 18:20)
Swan Song
From 17 Dec

RE-RELEASES

The Outsiders The Complete Novel
From Fri 22 Oct
Seven Samurai (Shichinin no Samurai)
From Fri 29 Oct
Naked
From Fri 12 Nov; Sat 13 Nov 17:20 (+ Q&A with director Mike Leigh, David Thewlis and Lesley Sharp)
The Shop around the Corner
From 3 December

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