

# The French Dispatch

By  Daniel Derksen

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*The French Dispatch* is many things - a bounty of stories within stories within memories within frameworks that converges into one organic whole, a cabinet of cinematic wonders of all shapes and sizes in constant dynamic motion, a love letter to the printed word in general and *The New Yorker* magazine in particular, to France and to French movies...a moving meditation on living far from home. And it is never just one of those elements at a time, but usually all at once.



From the visionary mind of Wes Anderson, *The French Dispatch* brings to life a collection of stories from the final issue of an American magazine published in a fictional 20th-century French city.

On the occasion of the death of its beloved Kansas-born editor Arthur Howitzer, Jr., the staff of *The French Dispatch*, a widely circulated American magazine based in the French city of Ennui-sur-Blasé, convenes to write his obituary.

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", a suspenseful tale of drugs, kidnapping and fine dining.

It stars Benicio del Toro, Adrien Brody, Tilda Swinton, Léa Seydoux, Frances McDormand, Timothée Chalamet, Lyna Khoudri, Jeffrey Wright, Mathieu Amalric, Stephen Park, Bill Murray, and Owen Wilson.

“This movie is comprised of visions of France,” says French-born composer Alexandre Desplat, “that have been a bit twisted because they went through Wes’ brain. So, you can say that it’s France, but it’s a poetic France, with many details and references that sometimes are not true, but they seem true. Is it the real France? No, but somehow, it’s French.”



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Says Anderson: “I remember reading an interview with Tom Stoppard in which someone asked him where one of his plays came from and he said that it’s always two different beginnings of an idea for something that he puts together and that becomes the next play. That’s exactly what happens to me every single time.

“So this movie is actually three things: a collection of short stories, something I’ve always wanted to do; a movie inspired by *The New Yorker* and the kind of writer they’re famous for publishing; and, I’ve spent a lot of time in France over the years and I’ve always wanted to do a French movie, and a movie that was related to French cinema,” says Anderson, whose directed from a story by Anderson & Roman Coppola & Hugo Guinness & Jason Schwartzman.

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## ABOUT DANIEL DERCKSEN

Daniel Dercksen has been a contributor for Lifestyle since 2012. As the driving force behind the successful independent training initiative The Writing Studio and a published film and theatre journalist of 40 years, teaching workshops in creative writing, playwriting and screenwriting throughout South Africa and internationally the past 22 years. Visit [www.writingstudio.co.za](http://www.writingstudio.co.za)

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