

In a 2019 interview with *Charente Libre*, Wes Anderson said that his new movie, "The French Dispatch" was "not easy to explain." He's right, it's not, and any explanation would deconstruct it in a way to make it sound even more incomprehensible. It's like taking apart a clock to see how it works, and in so doing you no longer know what time it is. A clock is an apt metaphor for Anderson's style, present in all of his movies, but to an extreme degree here. Made up of a dizzying array of whirring intersecting teeny tiny parts, "The French Dispatch" ticks forward relentlessly, never stopping to breathe, barely pausing for reflection.

The French Dispatch is a 2021 American anthology comedy drama film written, directed, and produced by Wes Anderson. It features an expansive ensemble cast and follows three different storylines as the French foreign bureau of the fictional Liberty, Kansas Evening Sun newspaper publishes its final issue.

## DIRECTOR wes anderson



Wesley Wales Anderson is an American filmmaker. His films are known for their eccentricity, unique visual and narrative styles, and frequent use of ensemble casts. They often contain themes of grief, innocence, and dysfunctional families.

## PLOT

In 1975, in the fictional French town of Ennui-sur-Blasé (from French, literally, "boredom on jaded"), Arthur Howitzer Jr., the editor of the magazine The French Dispatch, dies suddenly of a heart attack. According to the wishes expressed in his will, publication of the magazine is immediately suspended following one final farewell issue, in which four articles are published, along with an obituary.



# critics Ben Kenigsberg

Wes Anderson's "The French Dispatch," a pastiche centered on the France-based magazine supplement of a Kansas daily newspaper, has finally landed in Cannes' driveway more than a year after it was scheduled for delivery. (It's the only film from last year's official selection that waited for the next edition.) Wes Anderson continues his way of storytelling. I love that kind of telling a story.



Journalists were understandably excited about seeing Anderson's take on their profession, but the newsroom conceit turns out to be mere scaffolding for a much more sweeping homage to French art and culture. The magazine is run out of a bureau in "Ennui-sur-Blasé, France," and each section of the movie corresponds to something written in its pages. The first segment is an obituary for the editor, Arthur Howitzer Jr. (Bill Murray), who is remembered as a man who staffed his magazine with the best expatriate journalists and, after reading their stories, would give them a consistent note ("just try to make it sound like you wrote it that way on purpose"). But this isn't a movie about the staff, even if the setup suggests it might be. After being introduced as the magazine's resident grammarian, Elisabeth Moss, for instance, is pushed to the sidelines. Journalists were understandably excited about seeing Anderson's take on their profession, but the newsroom conceit turns out to be mere scaffolding for a much more sweeping homage to French art and culture.



The structure is actually even more complicated than that. At least two of the stories are presented at a double remove, with the writers talking about their writing. The flashbacks to Rosenthaler unfold from the perspective of the French Dispatch writer J.K.L. Berensen (Tilda Swinton) as she delivers a lecture. Wright's Wright tells his story from the set of a 1970s TV talk show.

# critics

## Filipe Freitas



The cinematic world of Wes Anderson remains fascinating, abundant in detail and eccentrically rich. All of these factors contribute to make *The French Dispatch*, a literary avant-garde anthology comedy whose skillfully constructed stories form a love letter to journalists, one of his best film in recent years. Anderson gives us a slice of journalistic life of other times with his peculiar comic touch.

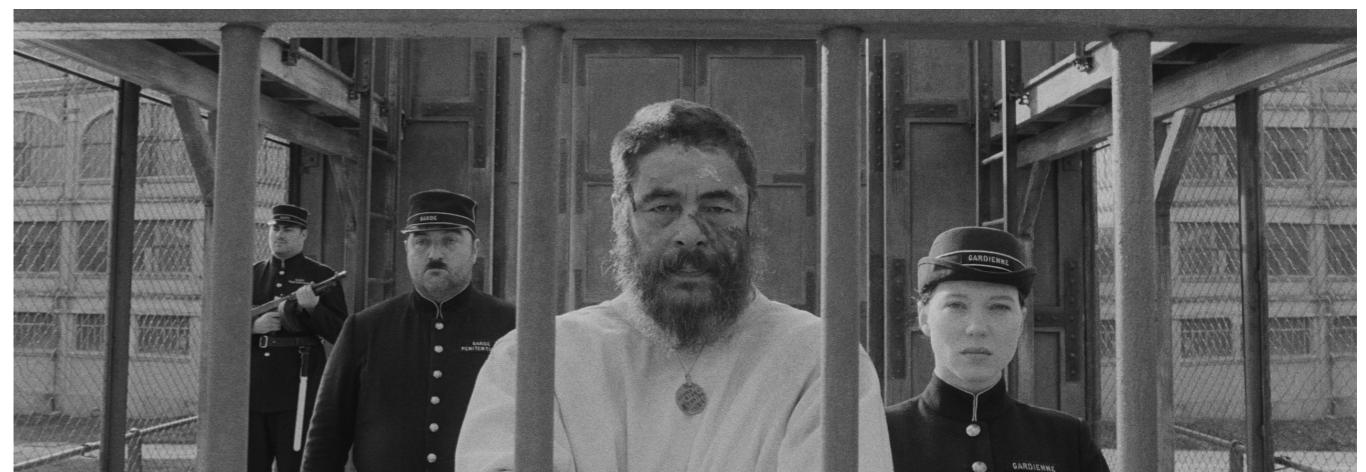
The film is structured with four stories, the first of them linking to the other three via Arthur Howitzer Jr., an indefatigable editor-in-chief who gathered a group of expatriate journalists to bring news from the fictional French metropolis Ennui-sur-Blasé to Kansas via *The French Dispatch*, the magazine he founded when he was a college freshman. Each of the other three stories feature a journalist and one of his/her highlighted article. The first of these, an unhinged account about a genius painter and dangerous psychotic inmate who uses a sculptural female guard as his artistic muse, is narrated by writer J.K.L. Berensen during a talk. The painter is made famous by another inmate with an eye for the modern art business. Simultaneously romantic and tragic, the following story connects the respected journalist Lucinda Krementz to a revolutionary student while the last article is described by the reporter Rombuck Wright during a TV interview. It features an animated sequence as climax and involves two policemen ant/chef and a commissaire whose son is kidnapped.



# critics

## casey chong

The last time we see Wes Anderson direct a feature film, it turns out to be a visually captivating stop-motion animation called *Isle of Dogs* in 2018. His latest film marks Anderson's return to the live-action feature in seven years since *The Grand Budapest Hotel* in 2014 sees the director pay a quirky homage to old-school journalism. Sunday supplement of the Liberty, Kansas Evening Sun newspaper.



As the film begins, we learn that the titular journal is founded by editor Arthur Howitzer, Jr. (Bill Murray, in his usual deadpan best) and the publication company is based in the fictional French city of Ennui-sur-Blasé. Told in an anthology form, *The French Dispatch* covers three major segments, beginning with "The Concrete Masterpiece", which takes place mostly in the

confines of Ennui's insane asylum. Here, we learn about a convicted killer, Moses Rosenthaler (Benicio del Toro) happens to be a talented artist as well. Over the course of his imprisonment, he chooses the prison guard Simone (Lea Seydoux) as his muse and his paintings have since attracted the attention of another inmate Julien Cadazio (Adrien Brody), who turns out to be an art

dealer. This whole segment alone, which is filmed mostly in pristine black and white, is easily the best part of the film. It has all the gleefully over-the-top and whimsical fun of a quintessential Wes Anderson film that hits the right spot, coupled with scene-stealing performances from Benicio del Toro, Adrien Brody and to a certain extent, Lea Seydoux. The latter's icy demeanour