

= Hotel Chevalier =

Hotel Chevalier is a 2007 American @-@ French short film written and directed by Wes Anderson and released in 2007 . Starring Jason Schwartzman and Natalie Portman as former lovers who reunite in a Paris hotel room , the 13 @-@ minute film acts as a prologue to Anderson 's 2007 feature The Darjeeling Limited . It was shot on location in a Parisian hotel by a small crew and self @-@ financed by Anderson , who initially intended it to be a stand @-@ alone work . Its first showing was at the Venice Film Festival première of the feature film on September 2 , 2007 , and it made its own debut later that month at Apple Stores in four American cities . The day after its première , it was made available for free from the iTunes Store for one month , during which it was downloaded more than 500 @,@ 000 times . The film garnered near @-@ universal critical acclaim from reviewers who compared it favorably with The Darjeeling Limited and praised its richness , poignancy , and careful construction .

= = Plot = =

In a hotel lobby , the concierge answers a phone call from one of the guests ' rooms . A man (Jason Schwartzman) lies on a hotel bed in a yellow bathrobe , watching the black @-@ and @-@ white American war film Stalag 17 and reading the newspaper . After ordering room service from the concierge in broken French , he receives a call from a woman whose voice he recognizes . She tells him she is on her way from the airport and asks for his room number . Despite objecting that he did not tell her she could come , the man consents nevertheless . He then hurriedly attempts to tidy the room ? pausing to play the opening bars of the song " Where Do You Go To (My Lovely) ? " by Peter Sarstedt on his stereo system ? and runs a bath .

The man is again lying on the bed , now in a gray suit . Hearing a knock , he starts the song playing again before opening the door to a woman (Natalie Portman) . After staring at him for several seconds , the woman breaks the silence by asking what music is playing . Receiving no response , she steps into the room and presents the man with a bouquet of flowers . When she moves to kiss him on the mouth , he turns his head away and they embrace instead . He closes the door and asks how she found him ; she replies that it " wasn 't actually that hard " . She moves around the room browsing through his possessions , brushes her teeth with his toothbrush and declines to take the bath he had run for her .

Stepping back into the bedroom , the woman turns to face the man and confronts him , asking slowly " what the fuck is going on ? " He motions to her to join him on the bed and at her prompting , he reveals in the ensuing conversation that he has been living in the hotel room for " more than a month " , and that he had left to escape their relationship . They lie back on the bed looking at one another before being interrupted by the arrival of room service . Once alone again , the two kiss and the man begins to undress the woman . They have an uncomfortable exchange about not having slept with other people and when he notices bruises on her arm after undressing her further , the woman chooses not to comment on them . Lying on top of him , she tells the man that she does not want to lose his friendship , that she loves him and never meant to hurt him . He responds coldly that he " will never be [her] friend " , but holds her when she embraces him . " Where Do You Go To (My Lovely) ? " starts again and the man offers to show the woman his view of Paris .

The woman is perched against an armoire , the man approaching and covering her naked body with the yellow bathrobe , and the two moving towards the window . After they step out on the balcony , the man draws a toothpick from his pocket and hands it to her with an upwards nod , which she reciprocates . After looking out for another few seconds she clasps his neck lightly and they step back inside .

= = Background and production = =

Director Wes Anderson first approached actors Schwartzman and Portman about Hotel Chevalier in 2005 . Schwartzman and Anderson had previously worked on Rushmore (1998) , Anderson 's cult

second feature , and had been living together in Schwartzman 's Paris apartment in the months leading up to the shoot . Portman was approached after the director obtained her email address from Scott Rudin , producer of 2004 's *Closer* in which she starred . The actors appeared for free , and Anderson financed the remainder of the production himself .

It was filmed at the Hôtel Raphael in Paris , on Avenue Kléber , two blocks south @-@ southwest of the Arc de Triomphe . The Hôtel Raphael had previously been used as a setting for the films *Love in Paris* (1996) and *Place Vendôme* (1998) . It was shot by a crew of 15 in Panavision and used props from Anderson 's apartment . Filming took two and a half days , and editing (done on Anderson 's computer) another week . Despite his use of a wardrobe from prestigious fashion designer Marc Jacobs and a handmade suitcase from Louis Vuitton , the director described the production as " like making a student film " .

Anderson initially intended it to be a stand @-@ alone short film , but shortly before filming commenced , he realized that Schwartzman 's character bore a close resemblance to one of the protagonists of a feature film he was writing at the time . That film would begin production a year later as *The Darjeeling Limited* . *Chevalier* takes place two weeks before Schwartzman 's character (named Jack Whitman in the feature) joins his two older brothers on a journey in India in *Darjeeling* . The dialogue between the characters at the end of *Chevalier* is recounted by Schwartzman 's character to his brothers at the close of the feature film , in the form of an excerpt from a short story he has composed . Portman 's character has a brief cameo in the feature . Fox Searchlight Pictures , the studio that backed *Darjeeling* , was unaware of the short until the feature had been made and claimed to have no financial interest in it .

= = Release = =

Hotel Chevalier was screened as part of the program at the world première of *The Darjeeling Limited* at the 64th Annual Venice Film Festival on September 2 , 2007 . The short had its own première at Apple Stores in New York City , Chicago , San Francisco and Santa Monica , California , on September 25 . Anderson , Schwartzman and Portman appeared at the New York screening in SoHo , after which they held a questions @-@ and @-@ answers session with the audience . The short was made available the following day as a free download from Apple 's iTunes Store . On September 28 , it preceded the showing of the feature on the opening night of the 2007 New York Film Festival . A press release posted before the première described the short as " the brief coda to a doomed romance and the prologue to *The Darjeeling Limited* " .

The film was withdrawn from iTunes after having been available for download for a month . Although it had been dismissed by USA Today columnist Susan Wloszczyna before its iTunes release as an amuse @-@ bouche that was " destined to be a mere footnote " , it was downloaded nearly 500 @,@ 000 times during its run , and received wide acclaim . Following its withdrawal from iTunes , the short was distributed in theaters as the prologue to the feature @-@ length film . Although *The New York Times* reported in October 2007 that distributor Fox Searchlight Pictures intended to promote *Chevalier* as a competitor for the Best Live Action Short Film of the Academy Awards , it was not among that year 's nominations . It was included as an extra feature on the *Darjeeling* 2008 DVD release , and Anderson 's screenplay for the short was published in the Winter 2007 issue of the literary magazine *Zoetrope* : All @-@ Story .

= = Critical reception = =

Along with being one of the year 's most discussed short films , *Hotel Chevalier* attracted considerable critical praise , with reviewers comparing it favorably to *The Darjeeling Limited* . *Entertainment Weekly* 's Gary Susman described it as " an exquisite short story where we learn not much but exactly enough about these two characters " , adding that " *Chevalier* sees Anderson working in his customary jewel @-@ box / dollhouse mode , but the form and length really suit each other here . " In *New York Press* , Armand White judged the short " moving and genuinely contemporary " , citing its " lost @-@ girl poignancy " . The film drew some attention for co @-@

star Natalie Portman 's extended nude scene , and for her character 's bruised body . Portman expressed disappointment at this focus , saying " It really depressed me that half of every review ... was about the nudity " . The episode made the actress reconsider the wisdom of this aspect of her performance , and she subsequently swore off nude appearances in film .

While *The Darjeeling Limited* received generally positive reviews , with review aggregator Rotten Tomatoes showing that 68 % of critics gave the film positive reviews , many of the positive reviews for *Hotel Chevalier* tended to combine praise of Chevalier with subtle shots at *Darjeeling* . Portman 's performance was praised by TIME reviewer Richard Corliss , who declared her to be " a comic actress in fresh bloom " in the " beguiling vignette " , and expressed his wish that her role in *Darjeeling* had been greater . The feature , he felt , lacked " the feeling and wit of the short film " . Salon.com 's Stephanie Zacharek concurred , stating that " the untold story of *Hotel Chevalier* is 10 times more interesting , and infinitely richer , than the one told outright in *The Darjeeling Limited* " , and calling the short " very close to perfect " . The Guardian columnist Danny Leigh contrasted the lukewarm reception of the feature among bloggers and critics with the " genuine ardour " that greeted the " perfectly measured narrative " of Chevalier . He proposed that the constraints of the short @-@ film format suited Anderson , whose trademark deadpan humor , idiosyncratic set designs and choice of soundtrack inclined to exhaust the viewers ' patience in a feature @-@ length work . A. O. Scott of The New York Times hailed Chevalier as " a small gem " in comparison to the " overstuffed suitcase " of the feature , and wrote that " It is worth seeking out , not only because it fleshes out part of the story of the Whitman brothers but also because , on its own , it is an almost perfect distillation of Mr. Anderson 's vexing and intriguing talents , enigmatic , affecting and wry . "