



The Darjeeling Limited

Owen Wilson, Adrien Brody, and Jason Schwartzman star in a film written by Wes Anderson, Roman Coppola, and Schwartzman, and directed by Anderson.

By Josef Woodard

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When it comes to modern American films that find the delicate balance between being tart, smart, and oddly warm and fuzzy, Wes Anderson rules. He's an aging wunderkind whose latest quirky delight, *The Darjeeling Limited*, affirms that the writer/director is thus far batting a thousand in his loveably idiosyncratic filmography.

As in past works, Anderson's new film finds him wrestling with themes of a fragmented-yet-magnetized family and a journey that doubles as a soul-searching venture. As usual, dry humor is liberally applied along the way; the sugar coating the existential pill.

How better to search for meaning and self than to take a rambling, foible-filled trip through India on and off a train called the Darjeeling Limited? Anderson has found unique routes to artistic expression, in a style both minimalist and baroque at the same time. Whereas *The Royal Tenenbaums* was a complex narrative jigsaw puzzle, the premise of *Darjeeling* is much cleaner,

at least on the surface: Three long-estranged brothers (Wilson, Brody, and Schwartzman) convene for a trip through India, following the death of their father and the disappearance of their mother. But that thumbnail plotline is only the beginning.

Droll humor is always a feature of Anderson's films, even when the air of cynicism and inter-character cruelty gets thick. In the new film, the drollery operates on multiple levels, from the deceptively casual dialogue to the seductive look of the film. On that subject, special kudos go to the cinematography of Robert Yeoman, whose work is a modest miracle of carefully wrought shots and colorful visual puns.

Musically, the atmosphere is perked up by aurally delicious Bollywood music and cleverly plotted cameos include Bill Murray, Natalie Portman, and director Barbet Schroeder.

All in all, Anderson has given us a film of spiritual depth and questioning masquerading as an arty comedy. At one point, when the train loses its way, an employee explains to the confused brothers, "We haven't found us yet." Wilson's character perks up: "We haven't found us yet. Is that symbolic?" Symbolism, pocket-sized revelations, and sneaky little punch lines keep being served up in *Darjeeling* like refreshing little glasses of sweet lime.