

INTRODUCTION

Wes Anderson is a famous auteur known for his whimsical and painterlike visuals, with each of his films standing out from the rest with their own colour palettes and charm.

He's always been a filmmaker ever since his childhood, making movies with super 8 film. He later made shorts with his friend Owen Wilson, some of them even airing on a local cable-access station. The short that really jumpstarted his career was *Bottle Rocket*. It got screened at the Sundance Film Festival and was so well liked that it got enough funding to be made into a feature length film.

He's come a long way since then though, making hit films such as *The Royal Tenenbaums*, *Moonrise Kingdom* and *The Grand Budapest Hotel*. Everyone knows him for his visual style, but surely there's more to it?

COLOURS

The first thing you probably notice when you watch an Anderson film are the distinct colours, *The Grand Budapest Hotel* has soft pinks and vibrant purples and *The French Dispatch* has desaturated blues and yellows. But how does he pull off such appealing visuals?

Well first off, he clearly knows about colour theory. In *Moonrise Kingdom* when Suzy opens her suitcase, there are three books. One of them stands out immediately against the warm oranges, but it still fits because blue and orange are complimentary colours.

Despite the colour jumping out at you immediately, the actual colour itself is never neon. The colours Anderson uses are bold but unsaturated.

He also has a reason for using colours in his films, in *The Grand Budapest Hotel* the fantastical purples of the past are contrasted with the wooden tones of the present. In *Moonrise Kingdom*, the film has a yellow-ish tinge to it so it looks like a film from the 1980s. Colours can also have specific meanings to Anderson like how red is often associated with grief, which leads onto the next point..

COSTUMES

In *The Royal Tenenbaums*, there's a character called Chas. He's had a hard life and with his mother recently passing, there's nothing he wants to do more than run away. He wears a red tracksuit throughout the film.

Another example of a character being associated with red while grieving is *Zissou*, he's miserable after the death of his friend and partner. The red beanies and blue uniforms in *The Life Aquatic* are also recognisable and bold.

Just as Anderson focuses on colours, he puts the same amount of effort into the costumes. Characters often wear a specific outfit for a reason: whether that be because of the time period or because of a specific reason to their character.

Throughout the film, Margot Tenenbaum wears a long fur coat and multiple tennis outfits. The coat symbolises her cold exterior while also protecting her from the rest of the world. As for the tennis outfits, her brother was a star tennis player. She also has a more childlike appearance while wearing them.

SET DESIGN (& PROPS)

The colours and costumes make the characters stand out, but what really brings them to life is the set design.

The backgrounds in Anderson films rarely look uninhabited. In *Moonrise Kingdom*, Sam's campsite and his cooking supplies are out in the open. When a scene is set in a social space, you can always spot people walking around and going about their daily lives. Sometimes background characters will interact with the main characters. The world always feels lived in.

The set in Anderson films are often vintage with a hint of postmodernism, this look is helped with the props. The props are bought from eBay and other thrift stores so they're as authentic as can be.

The settings of his movies are as iconic as his characters, *The Grand Budapest Hotel* is in the title for a reason. Adam Stockhausen, the production designer for the film, had designed the hotel to perfectly fit with Anderson's style. The hotel was designed to be symmetrical from all shots, in *The Darjeeling Limited*, Stockhausen even created a train-cart interior that was a replica of the one for the set.

CINEMATOGRAPHY (& EDITING)

The symmetry is an integral part to every Anderson film and is arguably his most recognisable trait. The camerawork is half of the reason it works, the cinematographer for his films always measures how to put the camera center in every shot. Backgrounds often feel flat because of the composition as well.

In *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, even the aspect ratio changes with the time. The opening of the movie is in one point eighty five [1.85] and its set in the nineteen eighties [1980s]. When the film is in the nineteen sixties [1960s], the ratio is two point four [2.4]. And the nineteen thirties [1930s] is in one point thirty seven [1.37]. The aspect ratio becomes smaller as the movie shifts backwards.

Anderson pays special attention to his title cards, often using the same few fonts for them. The fonts are clearly readable and bold, although *Moonrise Kingdom* is an exception to this.

Even when two characters are talking with each other, the shot typically focuses on one person in the center. Other times there's a shot that includes both characters. And when the characters walk, the camera often moves along with them.

Because of this, there are times where the camera moves fast with a character and then suddenly freezes static as they stop. This can be used for both comedy and unease.

One of the times its used for unease is in *The Darjeeling Limited*, three characters see three children drowning but after an accident occurs they're only able to save two. There's a shot of one of the characters carrying the dead child in their arms and then it suddenly cuts to them all walking together, giving us a moment of pause and reflection.

Anderson is very thorough with what he shows the audience, making it as clear as possible what's going on. Something he does often in his films is have a scene of a character reading a letter, shot in a way that it can also be read by the audience.

The lighting is often natural, Yeoman likes using natural sunlight and only uses soft lighting for backlighting. Altogether when mixed with everything else, every Anderson film has the characters look like they're in living paintings.

MUSIC & SFX

So we know what an Anderson film looks like, but how do they sound? The genres are often folk and euro rock, with many songs being from his childhood. Not to say he doesn't also have original music in his movies as well though, like in *Moonrise Kingdom*.

When it comes to the sound effects they're usually natural and don't stand out too much, which makes it more dramatic when it does. On rare occasions, sound effects are used to emphasise a big moment in a scene.

STORY

And last but not least, we'll finally cover what his movies are actually about. Anderson has inspirations but writes his movies completely from scratch, often from his perspective as a twelve year old. As mentioned before, a lot of his movies has a vintage look to them because they're often set around the early nineteen eighties [1980s].

When talking about this, he says:

"When you're eleven or twelve years old, you can get so swept up in a book that you start to believe that the fantasy is reality. I think when you have a giant crush when you're in fifth grade, it becomes your whole world. It's like being underwater; everything is different."

Sticking with the childish theme, most of his narratives are surprisingly simple. What really brings them out is the characters.

Many of his films focus on a young adult or a group of flawed people, they often start out selfish and contradictory. Even so they're often this way for a reason, usually because of a tragic event that happened to them. This usually comes from the characters having an absolutist world view that inevitably gets crushed as the character realises what reality is really like. By the end they learn that they're happier with other people and heal through their trauma. The characters can be self-centered and rude, but by the end of the movie they're hardly unlikeable.

END

Anderson's style is bold with a sophisticated yet childish feel, and is completely unique to him. It's easy to tell when he directed a film due to his use of colour, symmetry and set design. He's vintage and has a huge appreciation for his childhood days as a filmmaker.

He says his main inspiration when it comes to staging scenes is Roman Polanski and he's clearly inspired Godard and French New Wave somewhat too. Like every skilled auteur though, he's learnt to pick up the pieces and mould his inspirations into a style he can truly call his own.

Even though his filmography is small, he'll definitely be known as one of the greatest auteurs out there.