

The Darjeeling Ltd: Adrien Brody

Adrien Brody is probably best known for his Oscar-winning performance in the wartime drama *The Pianist*, but he gets a chance to show off an unexpected lighter side in *The Darjeeling Ltd*. Director Wes Anderson's quirky, gorgeously colorful movie tells the story of three estranged brothers who take a train trip across India in an attempt to renew their family bonds and maybe find a little spiritual enlightenment along the way. The siblings don't exactly reach nirvana but they do lose their luggage, get lost in the desert, and buy a snake that promptly goes AWOL. Wes Anderson's previous films include *Rushmore*, *The Royal Tenenbaums* and *The Life Aquatic*, and *The Darjeeling Ltd* reunites him with regular collaborators Owen Wilson and Jason Schwartzman (who play Brody's fellow siblings), Anjelica Huston (as their long-lost mother) and a briefly glimpsed Bill Murray. Adrien Brody, who was the newcomer to the group, talked to us at the Venice Film Festival, where *The Darjeeling Ltd* made its enthusiastically received debut on the world stage.

Q: How come you haven't been funny before?

A: I have never been given the opportunity! But maybe it's the start of something [laughs]. You know, I certainly can't complain about the opportunities I have been given as an actor and I am definitely attracted to very challenging roles. But people identify you with what they have seen you in and you get offered more of the same. I was grateful that Wes thought I could be funny and of course, if this movie does well, the next thing you know all I'll get offered is romantic comedies.

Q: By the way, when you run after a train in the film you look just like Buster Keaton...

A: I have been told that and it's a nice compliment. But what can I say? I was born to be lanky.

Q: Wes Anderson typically works with the same group of actors again and again. Were you surprised he offered you a role in this film?

A: I was honored. I am a big fan of his work and I was always saying to people that I wished I could be in one of his films. He's a unique filmmaker with a very individual way of looking at the world and it was lovely to get to be a part of the family so to speak. They're really great guys, all of them. I also thought this script was pretty special. What's beautiful about this film as far as I'm concerned is that at its core, as well as being very funny, it's also a very emotional film and something you can really connect to. It deals with family drama, family problems, getting rid of the baggage from the past, and yet it's also very humorous and light. It doesn't weigh you down at all.

Q: Did it occur to you that you, Jason Schwartzman and Owen Wilson don't exactly look like brothers at first glance?

A: Yes, but I think it's about behavior more than it's about looks and that's what makes our interaction as brothers believable. Also, making the movie was a bit like being in summer camp and hanging out with each other the whole time, so you start picking up people's phrases and mimicking the way they behave. I used to come home at night and kind of talk like Owen [Wilson], that soft, very specific way of talking he has.

Q: The film is set in India. Does that mean it was shot entirely on a soundstage in Hollywood?

A: Thankfully not. And I attribute a lot of the film's texture and feel to actually shooting on location in India. It was an experience and an adventure and an inspiration for the all the cast and crew. And it allowed us to create a sense of authenticity.

Q: Wes Anderson's films suggest he's very precise in his direction and very clear about the way he wants things to look. How did that work out when you were apparently shooting on a real train?

A: Well, the train was ours for the duration of the shoot; we weren't riding along with the local commuters. But the beauty of India is that you cannot override the chaos, you

can't override the spontaneous things that happen and you really have to accept that and roll with it. We shot on the streets and in a bazaar in Jaipur and that was a pretty free-flowing experience. On a train you have a pretty controlled environment in a way but the train was forever stopping randomly for no apparent reason. Sometimes a cow would be crossing the track and would be stubborn and not move, so a guy would have to get out and shoo it off.

Q: Had you been to India before?

A: Yes, and to be honest, I wasn't especially eager to go back. That's not a reflection on India. I mean, I thought New York was tough but you get to India and all your senses are assaulted. But I was more open to it this time.

Q: Your next starring role is in Manolete, an independent film in which you play a bullfighter...

A: Yes, and putting on that outfit was very challenging.

Q: I was going to ask if you just say no to the big blockbusters?

A: Well, I was in King Kong and that was very challenging to me. I thought it would be a reprieve from all the difficulties of making films like The Pianist, but it was actually just as challenging because there are scenarios that I am having to envision, that completely do not exist, that I have no point of reference for. I used to run from gangs of kids in New York and that was the only reference I had for being chased by a giant gorilla

Q: Can't you just pretend?

A: [Laughs]. The only way that I can really work is by connecting with the material. I'm not a very good actor in the sense that some actors are obviously great at looking sincere and not meaning it. They could sit here talking complete rubbish and you would believe it... The other danger with making commercial films is that they get toned down and compromised so much and they can become generic. I'm really invested in the

work I do and so it has to matter to me.

Q: There's obviously nothing generic about this film...

A: The beauty of doing independent films is they can be original. I think The Darjeeling Ltd is one of the most original films I have ever seen.

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