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REEL CRITIQUE

The Royal Tenenbaums
 Directed by Wes Anderson
 Starring: Gene Hackman, Ben Stiller, Gwyneth Paltrow
 Touchstone Pictures



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF TOUCHSTONE PICTURES

Wes Anderson's third feature-length effort, *The Royal Tenenbaums*, plays like a spin-off from the director's last film, 1998's sensational *Rushmore*. Though in no way related to its now cult classic predecessor, there are a number of immediately noticeable similarities between the two. Like *Rushmore*, the film was co-written by Anderson and Owen Wilson.

Another obvious parallel is the painstaking design of every scene, placing particular emphasis on the costumes and settings that reflect the director's highly stylized, retro approach. A remarkable ensemble of actors, including Gene Hackman, Anjelica Houston, Gwyneth Paltrow, Ben Stiller, Bill Murray and Luke and Owen Wilson, supplements the film's distinctive look and allows the movie to narrow its focus to the characters and their quirks. The Tenenbaum family is a group of oddballs, and nowhere is this more apparent than in their attire. What makes

this even more unusual is most of them wear the same outfit the length of the film.

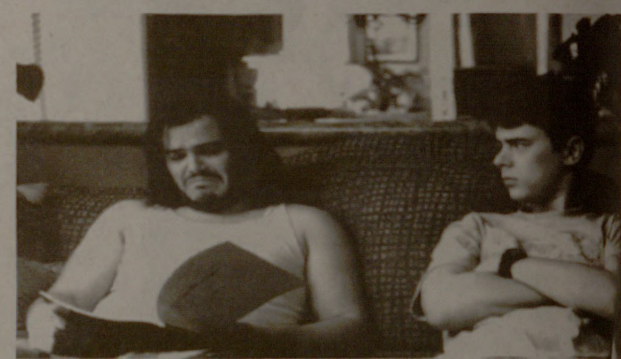
Royal (Hackman), the family's failed patriarch, is a washed-up lawyer who feels sorry for himself. Years after leaving his wife and children, a shameless Royal uses the excuse of stage cancer to return to the family house and make up for lost time. Royal's wife Etheline, (Houston) begrudgingly welcomes her estranged husband into the house, where their three children have gathered during the winter by coincidence.

Each of the kids has a unique set of idiosyncrasies, probably a result of their dad's past mistakes. Stiller is hilarious as performance as the irritable Chas whose fretful antics lead to a number of amusing events, including several spirited arguments with family members. Luke Wilson plays Chas' brother, Ben, the ex-tennis pro who quit at the peak of his career during an important match. Luke Wilson does a fine job portraying a brother whose fixation on his adopted sister, Margot, drives to the point of insanity. Margot, a gifted playwright played by Paltrow, suffers from a lifelong bout with depression due to her dad's alienation.

Margot's husband, writer Raleigh St. Clair, is played by Bill Murray (another *Rushmore* holdover). A leery spouse, Raleigh's suspicions are justified by a wife whose promiscuity is a reflection of her low self esteem. Danny Gheesbregts makes an entertaining appearance as well as the bow-tie-wearing Henry Sherman, Etheline's love interest. His spat with Royal in the kitchen will have audiences in stitches. Finally, Owen Wilson, executive producer of the film, is very funny as Royal's family friend Eli. His televised interview scene is one of the movie's funniest moments. While admittedly not the best plot, *The Royal Tenenbaums* and their comical behavior makes the film interesting from beginning to end. Though the half-hour is somewhat overwhelming, the initial waxy expository scenes soon gives way to the story, and the pace is not far behind. A worthy follow-up to his prior effort, Wes Anderson's latest creation is worth the price of admission. (Grade: B+)

-Gabe P...

Orange County
 Directed by Jake Kasdan
 Starring: Jack Black, Colin Hanks
 MTV Films



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF PARAMOUNT PICTURES

Orange County succeeds in being both funny and uplifting. The plot revolves around the main character, Shaun (Hanks), who is trying to get into Stanford to study with the writer who inspired him to pick up the pen. Unfortunately, his guidance counselor sends the wrong transcript, sinking Shaun's efforts. With the help of his brother, (Black) Shaun sets off to make a personal visit to the dean of admissions to correct the situation.

Black's performance is hilarious, not to mention immodest, as he spends an enormous amount of film time in his underwear. Black manages to steal the scene whenever he appears; however, Hanks garners quite a few laughs himself. The film manages to amuse without detracting from the plot or relying entirely on slapstick humor. Unlike many comedies of today, the funniest parts are not shown on the previews.

Despite the numerous mishaps that threaten to derail Shaun's efforts, the voyage becomes one of self-discovery, as

he ends up face-to-face with his mentor. This conversation about Shaun's heart at ease, and manages to evoke a response from the audience with a few subtly portrayed messages about life. The viewer should not be expecting a treatise on the way to live, but *Orange County* will leave you crying with laughter. (Grade: A-)

-Mike W...

PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Jay-Z and R. Kelly collaborate for upcoming album

NEW YORK (AP) — Two heavyweights of rap and R&B are teaming up for a joint album and tour.

Rapper Jay-Z and singer R. Kelly, both Grammy winners and multiplatinum artists, have collaborated on the disc "The Best of Both Worlds," which is scheduled for release March 26.

They announced the project Thursday at a grandiose, rambling news conference at The Waldorf-Astoria hotel that featured introductions by Johnnie Cochran Jr. and testimonials from Sean "P. Diddy" Combs and Ronald Isley of the Isley Brothers. Members of their entourages sat nearby, dressed in fur and sipping Cristal from gold-encrusted goblets.

They have previously collaborated on two hits: R. Kelly's "Fiesta" remix and Jay-Z's "Not Guilty."

"It's like mad scientists in the basement," R. Kelly said.



JAY-Z

"Jay is real creative, I'm real creative, and you want to mix together and mix potions."

Jay-Z is on Def Jam Records while R. Kelly is on Def Jam will promote the disc in the United States, Canada, while Jive will do so in the rest of the world. While R&B and rap stars frequently do guest spots on each other's records — such as Jennifer Lopez and Ja Rule, and City High and Eve — a joint album is rare.

The first single is the sexually explicit "Honey," which played at the news event as Combs, Cochran and others bobbed their heads to the beat. When a reporter asked what the album's message would be for young people, R. Kelly said: "This album is not Disneyland. It's up to the parents to bring the kids up the way they should."

Besides the album and upcoming tour, the two announced they would headline an all-star Urban Aid concert for LifeBeat to raise funds for AIDS charities. The 9 event will air live on BET from New York's Belasco Theater, representatives said.

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